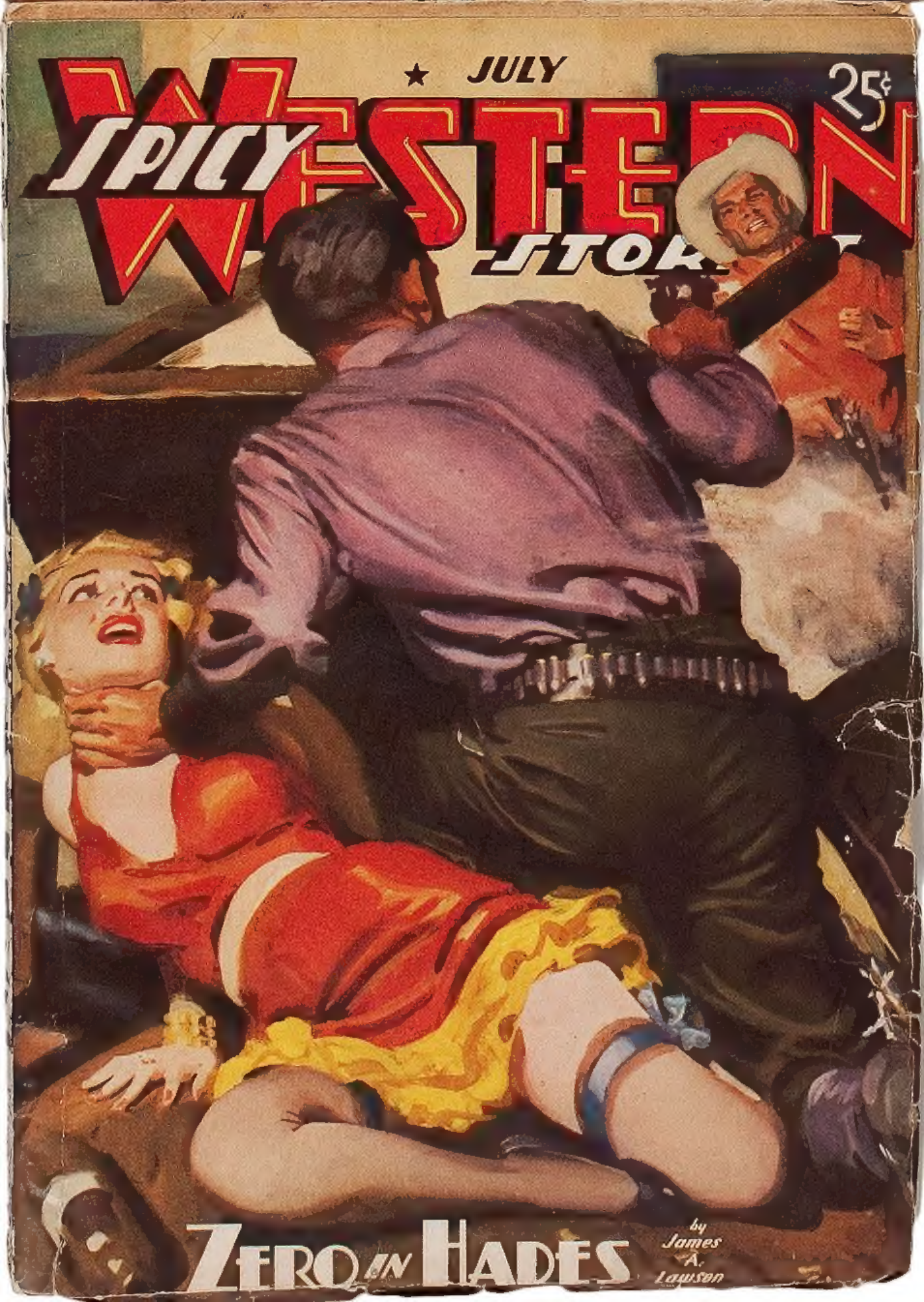
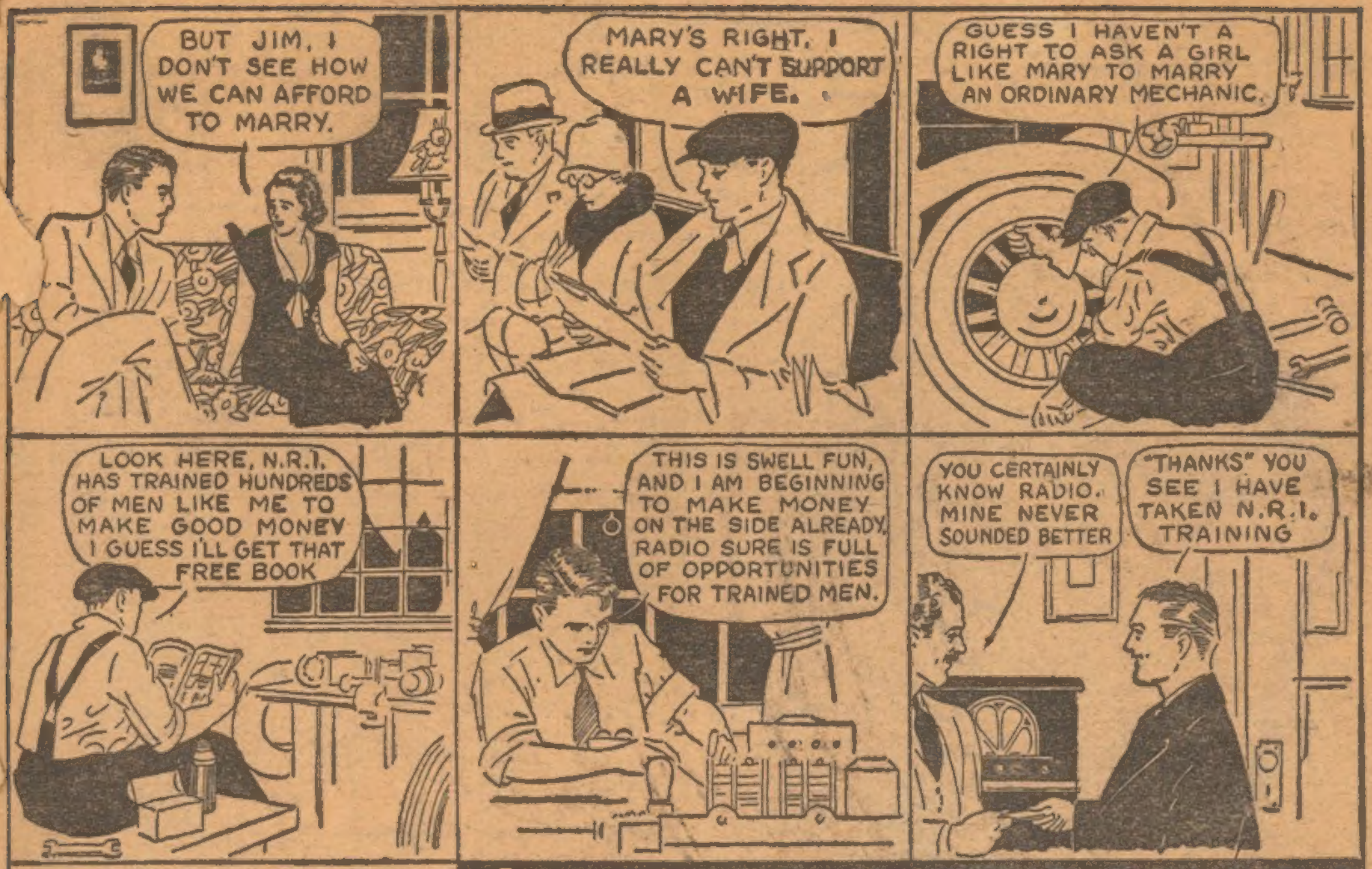

★ JULY
SPICY WESTERN STORIES
25¢
ZERO IN HADES
by James A. Lawson


BUT JIM, I DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN AFFORD TO MARRY.
MARY'S RIGHT. I REALLY CAN'T SUPPORT A WIFE.
GUESS I HAVEN'T A RIGHT TO ASK A GIRL LIKE MARY TO MARRY AN ORDINARY MECHANIC.
LOOK HERE, N.R.I. HAS TRAINED HUNDREDS OF MEN LIKE ME TO MAKE GOOD MONEY I GUESS I'LL GET THAT FREE BOOK
THIS IS SWELL FUN, AND I AM BEGINNING TO MAKE MONEY ON THE SIDE ALREADY. RADIO SURE IS FULL OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINED MEN.
YOU CERTAINLY KNOW RADIO. MINE NEVER SOUNDED BETTER
"THANKS" YOU SEE I HAVE TAKEN N.R.I. TRAINING
OH! JIM, IT'S WONDERFUL. NOW YOU'RE ON THE WAY TO SUCCESS
YES MARY, AND THERE'S A REAL FUTURE FOR US IN THIS RADIO FIELD.

I'LL TRAIN YOU AT HOME *in Your Spare Time For A* GOOD RADIO JOB

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute

Established 25 Years

He has directed the training of more men for the Radio Industry than anyone else.

Many Radio Experts Make $30, $50, $75 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, station managers and pay well for trained men. Fixing Radio sets in spare time pays many $200 to $500 a year—full time jobs with Radio jobbers, manufacturers and dealers as much as $30, $50, $75 a week. Many Radio Experts open full or part time Radio sales and repair businesses. Radio manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen in good-pay jobs with opportunities for advancement. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio, loudspeaker systems are newer fields offering good opportunities now and for the future. Television promises to open many good jobs soon. Men I trained have good jobs in these branches of radio. Read how they got their jobs. Mail coupon.

Many Make $5, $10, $15, a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll I start sending Extra Money Job Sheets; show you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your training I send plans and directions, that made good spare time money—$200 to $500—for hundreds, while learning. I send you special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 method of training makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. I ALSO GIVE YOU A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE, ALL-PURPOSE RADIO SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make good money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time jobs after graduation.

Find Out What Radio Offers You

Act Today. Mail the coupon now for "Rich Rewards in Radio." It's free to any fellow over 16 years old. It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my training in Radio and Television; shows you letters from men I trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Find out what Radio offers YOU! MAIL COUPON in an envelope, or paste on a postcard—NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 9DX1
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

HERE'S PROOF THAT MY TRAINING PAYS

Chief Operator Broadcasting Station

Over $1,000 Before Graduating

"When I completed 20 lessons I obtained my Radio Broadcast Operator's license and immediately joined station WMPC, where I am now Chief Operator."—HOLLIS F. HAYES, 85 Madison St., Lapeer, Mich.

"Before completing half the N.R.I. Course I was servicing sets, and I made $1,000 to $1,200 before graduating. I am doing Radio service work for myself now."—ASHLEY G. ALDRIDGE, 1228 Shepherd St., Petersburg, Va.

$200 to $300 a Month In Own Business

"For the past 18 months I have been in business for myself, making between $200 and $300 a month. I have N.R.I. to thank for my start in this field."—ARLIE J. FROEHNER, 224 W. Texas Ave., Goose Creek, Texas.

THIS FREE BOOK HAS HELPED HUNDREDS OF MEN MAKE MORE MONEY

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 9DX1
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send "Rich Rewards in Radio," which points out spare time and full time opportunities in Radio and explains your method of training men at home to be Radio Experts. (Please write plainly.)

NAME..... AGE.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY..... STATE.....

SPICY WESTERN STORIES

July, 1939 Vol. 5, No. 3

CONTENTS

TUMBLEWEED THAWS 6
Luke Terry

WILD WAGON WHEELS 18
Larry Dunn

HAT RACK CROSSES THE RIVER 30
E. Hoffmann Price

GUN-HAWK FIRE 42
Rex Norman

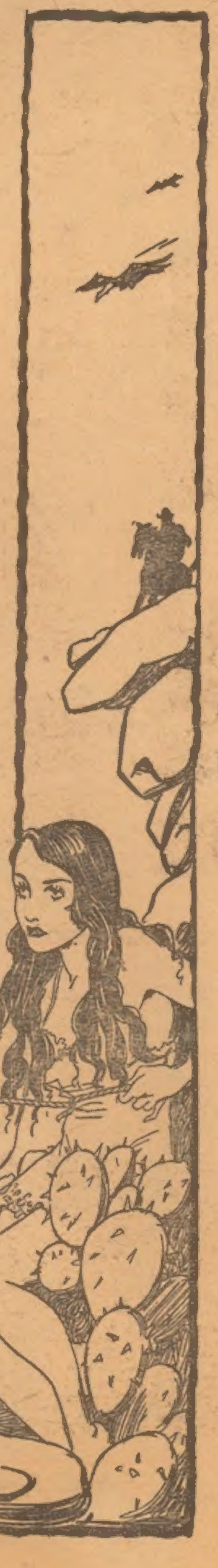
DEATH IS ON THE HOUSE 54
Mel Davis

CASSIDY IS SUDDEN 62
Laurence Donovan

SHOOTIN' ARMY GAL 70
Bart Gilvin

The names and descriptions of all characters appearing in this magazine are entirely fictitious. If there is any resemblance either in name or description, to any living person, it is purely a coincidence.

SPICY WESTERN STORIES *is published by the* CULTURE PUBLICATIONS, INC., *900 Market Street, Wilmington, Delaware. The publisher assumes no responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts.*



MAKE MORE MONEY

GET AHEAD FASTER

"WOULDN'T IT MEAN a lot to you—in school—at a job—to write *twice as fast?* You can—with a Royal Portable. But first mail the coupon. Get the facts—all of them! No obligations."

"BILL IS TRYING SO HARD for that new job—it would pay us to get a Royal Portable!"

"THEY ALL NEED a Royal Portable! Bob studies law. Dad brings work home, mother writes letters."

GET A

ROYAL

THE PORTABLE WITH THE OFFICE TYPEWRITER FEATURES ON FREE HOME TRIAL

SUCCESS . . . brightest hope of all! Get this proven aid . . . a Royal Portable. It will bring the life-long advantage of legible writing—of clear thinking—open up ever new and greater opportunities.

SEND NO MONEY . . .

FREE HOME TRIAL . . . Right in your own home without risking a single penny, see what a Royal Portable will do—for you—for every member of your family! See how quick and easy it makes writing . . . see how it makes your ideas stand out, clear, impressive. Know that it's one of the biggest helps that ever came into your life! Then—when you've fully made up your mind—own it, with a year to pay, if you wish. Act now—use the coupon . . . It will be a revelation to you.

Copyright, 1938, Royal Typewriter Company, Inc.

ONLY ROYAL GIVES YOU ALL THESE FEATURES

TOUCH CONTROL* . . . PERMANENT QUIET FINGER COMFORT KEYS . . . ACCELERATING TYPEBAR ACTION . . . AUTOMATIC PAPER LOCK . . . GENUINE DUST PROTECTION . . . TOUCH-SET TABULATOR . . . FULL SIZE KEYBOARD . . . Many other OFFICE TYPEWRITER FEATURES.

*Trade-mark for key tension device

FREE! Instant Typing Chart. Only Royal has it!

YOURS! The Duo-Case! With every Royal Portable—at no extra price!

MAIL TODAY! This coupon brings complete information. No obligation.

SEND NO MONEY! ACT QUICKLY!

Royal Typewriter Co., Inc.
Dept. D-39, 2 Park Avenue,
New York City, N. Y.

Please tell me how I can get a Royal Portable on FREE HOME TRIAL; also how I can own one on EASY MONTHLY TERMS.

Name.....

Street.....City.....

County.....State.....

I own a.....Typewriter, Serial No.

.....How much will you allow as a CASH payment on a New Royal?

Millions of Books Can Now Be Had at 20 BOOKS for $1

14 What Every Girl Should Know
19 Nietzsche's Philosophy. Durant
25 Rhyming Dictionary
39 Aristotle's Philosophy. Durant
42 Origin of Human Race
53 Insects and Men: Instinct vs. Reason. Clarence Darrow
56 Dictionary of U. S. Slang
58 Tales from Decameron. Boccaccio
72 Color of Life and Love
74 Physiology of Sex Life
82 Common Faults in English
83 Evolution of Marriage
87 Nature of Love
91 Manhood: Facts of Life
92 Hypnotism Explained
97 Self-Contradictions of Bible
98 How to Love
109 Facts About Classics
110 History of World War
125 Woodrow Wilson's War Speeches
126 History of Rome. Wood
133 Principles of Electricity
150 Lost Civilizations
159 Story of Plato's Philosophy
172 Evolution of Sex
175 A Hindu Book of Love
176 Four Essays on Sex
192 Book of Synonyms
217 Puzzle of Personality
218 Essence of the Talmud
228 Plain Talks With Husbands and Wives. Ellis
271 Is Death Inevitable?
286 Prostitution in the Ancient World
287 Best Jokes About Doctors
297 Do We Need Religion?
326 How to Write Short Stories
347 A Book of Riddle Rimes
364 How to Argue Logically
367 Improve Your Conversation
374 Psychology of Suicide
375 Love Story of an Old Maid
377 Psychology of Joy and Sorrow
383 Prostitution in the U. S.
403 Facts About Music
411 Facts About Phrenology
414 Art of Being Happy
431 U. S. Commercial Geography
439 My 12 Years in a Monastery
440 Baseball, How to Play
446 Psychology of Religion
447 Auto-Suggestion: How It Works
449 Auto-Suggestion and Health
452 Dictionary of Scientific Terms
467 Evolution Made Plain
473 Lives of Chorus Girls
475 Develop Sense of Humor
479 How N. Y. Girls Live
488 Don't Be a Wall Flower
491 Psychology for Beginners
498 Novel Discoveries in Science
501 How to Tie Knots
508 Short History of Civil War
509 Are We Machines? Darrow
518 How to Make Candy
524 Death and Its Problems
529 Woman the Criminal
536 What Women Beyond 40 Should Know
556 Hints on Etiquette
557 Is the Moon a Dead World?
603 The Electron Theory
606 How to Play Chess
609 Are the Planets Inhabited?
627 Short History of the Jews
629 Handbook of Legal Forms
637 German-English Dictionary
639 4,000 Essential English Words
644 Women Who Lived for Love
645 Confidential Chats with Wives
648 Sexual Rejuvenation
653 What Boys Should Know
654 What Young Men Should Know
655 What Young Women Should Know
656 What Married Men Should Know
657 What Married Women Should Know
658 Toasts for All Occasions
661 Neurotic America and Sex
679 Chemistry for Beginners
681 Spelling Self Taught
682 Grammar Self Taught
683 Punctuation Self Taught
687 U. S. Constitution
688 Teeth and Mouth Hygiene
689 Woman's Sexual Life
690 Man's Sexual Life
691 Child's Sexual Life
696 How to Pronounce Proper Names
697 4,000 Words Often Mispronounced
703 Physiology Self Taught
704 Facts About Palmistry
705 100 Professions for Women
710 Botany for Beginners
715 Auction Bridge for Beginners
717 Modern Sexual Morality
724 Burbank Funeral Oration. Judge Lindsey
726 Facts About Venereal Diseases
727 Psychology of Affections
730 Mistresses of Today
731 Mental Differences of Men and Women
734 Book of Useful Phrases
759 How to Conquer Stupidity
767 Facts About Astrology
768 Best Jokes About Lawyers
773 Good Habits and How to Form Them
775 First Aid for Investors
777 Riddle of Human Behavior
781 Catholicism and Sex
782 Psycho-Analysis, Mind and Body
784 Association Tests in Psycho-Analysis
789 Digest of U. S. Marriage and Divorce Laws
800 Sex in Psycho-Analysis
801 A Rapid Calculator
804 Freud on Sleep and Sexual Dreams
810 Scandals of Paris Life
815 Familiar Quotations
816 Shakespearean Quotations
817 Her Burning Secret
819 Book of Strange Murders
820 Jokes About Married Life
821 Improve Your Vocabulary
822 Rhetoric Self Taught
823 English Composition Self Taught
835 Handbook of Useful Tables
841 Future of Religion
842 Best Jokes of 1925
843 Can You Control Conduct?
845 Facts About Fortune Telling
846 Womanhood: Facts of Life
847 How to Play Card Games
850 Bad Habits and How to Break Them
851 Bible Myths and Legends
853 How to Know the Songbirds
855 How to Write Letters
856 Arithmetic Self Taught, 1
857 Arithmetic Self Taught, 2
858 Psychology of Leadership
862 German Self Taught
864 Chats With Husbands
869 Best Jokes of 1927
872 Manual Parliamentary Law
876 Curiosities of Mathematics
877 French Cooking for Amateurs
879 Best Jokes About Preachers
882 Psychology of Character Building
883 Capital Punishment
884 Debate on Prohibition
889 Jokes About Kissing
891 Your Talent and How to Develop It
893 500 Riddles
894 How to Advertise
895 Astronomy for Beginners
896 Wages of Sin
901 Woman: Eternal Primitive
902 Dictionary of Foreign Words
903 All About Syphilis
904 Sex Symbolism. Fielding
910 Is Life Worth Living?
911 Is Mankind Progressing?
964 How to be Happy Though Married
966 Rational Sex Ethics
972 Book of Popular Jokes
975 Cleopatra and Her Loves
984 Harmony Self Taught
986 How to Talk and Debate
987 Art of Kissing
988 The Art of Courtship
995 How to Play the Piano
997 Recipes Home Cooking
999 Latin Self Taught
1000 Wonders of Radium
1003 How to Think Logically
1004 How to Save Money
1005 How to Enjoy Music
1006 Children's Games
1007 Revolt Against Religion
1008 Origin of Religion. McCabe
1009 Typewriting Self-Taught
1010 Amateur Magic Tricks
1011 French-English Dictionary
1012 Best Negro Jokes
1013 Best Irish Jokes
1014 Best American Jokes
1015 Comic Dialect Poems
1018 Humorous Limericks
1020 Why I Am an Infidel
1021 Italian Self Taught
1023 Popular Recitations
1030 World's Great Religions
1049 How to Sing
1051 Cause and Nature of Genius
1052 Nature of Instinct and Emotions
1053 Guide to N.Y. Strange Sections
1056 Devil's Dictionary
1061 Human Origin of Morals
1062 Humoresque. Fannie Hurst
1064 Simplicity of Radio
1065 Lives of U.S. Presidents
1069 Conquest of Fear
1070 How to Fight Nervous Troubles
1074 Commercial Law
1078 Morals in Greece and Rome
1079 Phallic Elements in Religion
1082 Best Jewish Jokes
1084 Did Jesus Ever Live?
1088 Truth About Mussolini
1089 Common Sense of Sex
1091 Facts About Cancer
1092 Simple Beauty Hints
1093 Amusing Puns
1094 Insanity Explained
1097 Memory; How to Use It
1103 Puzzles and Brain Teasers
1105 Spanish-English Dictionary
1109 Spanish Self Taught
1111 Prostitution in Medieval World
1118 Love from Many Angles
1122 Degradation of Woman
1123 Facts About Puritan Morals
1124 On the Bum
1126 Eating for Health
1130 The Dark Ages. McCabe
1135 Prostitution in Modern World
1138 What Atheism Means
1139 Photography Self Taught
1144 Truth About Jesuits
1148 Sexual Crime in U.S. Law
1164 Unlovely Sin. Ben Hecht
1167 Sinister Sex, etc. Hecht
1174 How to Write Business Letters
1176 A Mad Love. Frank Harris
1204 Dictionary of Musical Terms
1206 How to Swim
1207 French Self Taught
1208 Success Easier than Failure
1209 Charming Hostess: Entertainment Guide
1210 Mathematical Oddities
1216 Italian-English Dictionary
1221 Facts About Will Power

Combined Publication, Dept. CP-7, 125 E. 46th St., NEW YORK CITY

Popular Copyrights Are A Smash Hit!

TAKE your pick of the Little Blue Books listed on this page at the rate of 20 books for $1, plus 1c per book for carriage. Choose yours now! Order today!

1225 How to Avoid Marital Discord
1228 Jokes About Drunks
1231 Best Jokes of 1926
1233 Better Meals for Less Money
1238 Beginning Married Life Right
1239 Party Games for Grown-ups
1241 Outline of U.S. History
1242 Care of Skin and Hair
1244 How to Write Love Letters
1246 Best Hobo Jokes
1247 Psychology of Love and Hate
1249 Best Jokes About Lovers
1250 Companionate Marriage
1251 What Do You Know?
1257 How to Become Citizen
1278 Ventriloquism Self Taught
1279 Side Show Tricks
1285 Gamblers' Crooked Tricks
1292 Best Short Stories of 1928
1311 Real Aims of Catholicism
1316 Revolt of Modern Youth
1317 Meaning of U.S. Constitution
1318 Case for and Against Sexual Sterilization
1320 How to Get a Husband
1321 Fasting for Health
1322 Confessions of a Modern Woman
1329 Facing Life Fearlessly
1330 Facts About Digestion
1338 Common Sense of Health
1337 Breakdown of Marriage
1339 Crooked Financial Schemes
1340 How to Get a Job
1341 Unusual Menus
1342 Typical Love Problems
1347 Trial Marriage
1349 Life of Lindbergh
1351 How to Get Ahead
1354 Book of Similes
1356 How to Make Wills
1357 What You Should Know About Law
1358 How to Acquire Good Taste
1359 Is Birth Control a Sin?
1360 Pocket Cook Book
1361 Who Killed Jesus?
1362 Law for Women
1368 Law for Auto-Owners
1365 How to Build Vocabulary
1371 Sins of Good People
1379 President Harding's Illegitimate Daughter
1380 Flesh and the Devil
1382 Is Our Civilization Over-Sexed?
1385 Defense of Devil
1388 Are the Clergy Honest?
1389 Tobacco Habit
1392 Confessions of a Gold Digger
1395 Instantaneous Personal Magnetism
1412 Stories of Tramp Life
1418 My Prison Days
1419 Unusual Deaths
1420 Why Wives Leave Home
1421 How to Get a Divorce
1426 Foot Troubles Corrected
1428 Unusual Love Affairs
1430 Shorthand Self Taught
1434 How to Think Clearly
1436 Strange Marriage Customs
1437 Curiosities of the Law
1439 Intelligence, How to Test It
1440 Can Man Know God?
1442 Facts About Graphology
1445 Wild Women of Broadway
1448 Character Reading from Faces
1450 Do We Live Forever?
1455 End of the World, McCabe
1459 Psychology of Criminal
1460 American Statistics
1471 How to Become Mentally Superior
1475 Best Jokes of 1928
1476 What You Should Know About Your Sensations
1477 How Glands Affect Personality
1480 Causes of World War
1481 The New Immorality
1484 Why Preachers Go Wrong
1491 Power of Women
1493 Wine, Women and Song
1496 Sexual Factor in Divorce
1497 Companionate Divorce
1498 M.U. Sex Questionnaire
1500 Why I Am an Agnostic
1501 Mussolini and the Pope
1503 Effective English In Speech
1504 Overcome Self-Consciousness
1508 Facts About Poisons
1513 Statistics: How to Understand Them
1514 Edison's Inventions
1516 Facts About Gonorrhea
1523 How to Avoid Catching Venereal Diseases
1531 Can We Follow Jesus Today?
1532 Don Quixote
1534 How to Test Urine
1535 How to Throw a Party
1536 Facing Death Fearlessly
1538 Rational Sex Code
1542 Who Started World War?
1543 Is War Inevitable?
1544 Against Capital Punishment
1548 Chinese Cook Book
1553 Exercises for Nervousness and Indigestion
1554 Exercises for the Heart
1555 Rules for Success in Business
1556 How Sun Gives Health
1559 Can We Change Human Nature?
1563 Marvels of Sunlight
1565 Catholicism and the Public Schools
1566 How to Conduct Love Affair
1568 Full Text Edison's Scholarship Questionnaire
1569 Boccaccio—Lover of Love

How to Order

Just list titles desired by number. Order at least 20 books and enclose money order, check or currency at rate of 20 books for $1—minimum order $1. Add 1c per book to cover carriage, and books will be shipped prepaid. (Add 10c to personal check. It is best to remit by cash, postal money order or **unused** U. S. stamps.) No C.O.D. Canadian and foreign prices, 7c per book, delivered, Canada or foreign must remit by international postal money order.

[Each order for $1 or more entitles you to a trial subscription to The American Freeman, at no extra cost, if you ask for it. This is the growing questions and answers magazine.]

Use This Simple Order Form for Popular Copyrights

COMBINED PUBLICATION, Dept. CP-7
125 E. 46th St., New York City

Enclosed please find $.....which is payment at the rate of 20 books for $1 for the following popular copyrights which I have listed by number on the lines below. (Add 1c per book for carriage.)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Name.....

Address.....

City..... *State*.....

Tumbleweed Terry, lawman, didn't know how many outlaws he'd killed, from Canada to the Border. But he knew a couple who were going to be added to the list if harm came to a certain Indian girl and her sweetheart!

IT WAS a swell dream, I remember, all about me beating the Staffels from hell to breakfast and running them clear off the range and out of town, and rescuing Storm Kilday from some Piutes gone on the warpath; and how Taylor, the assayer at Hereford finally told me he'd made a mistake, and the samples from my Empire State Mine ran so high I'd be a millionaire in practically no time. So there I was, practically on top of the world, and I had my

Tumbleweed Thaws

By LUKE TERRY

"Talk, damn you!" she said. "Where's that contract?"

arm around Storm Kilday's shoulders, pressing her close to me, her cheek against mine and her hair blowing in my face and smelling so good, like it always smells.

But when I woke up I had my good arm around the pillow, and the cabin was a deep grey with dawn, just light enough for me to see my frosty breath in the smelly air.

I raised up on the elbow of my good arm, wincing a little, because I was so stiff and sore and black and blue from my last beating, and I peered out through the window with the one eye that wasn't swollen shut. There was six or eight inches of fresh snow on the ground and I remembered then how only half awake I'd heard the wind howling last night after I'd

crawled between the blankets.

I expect I cussed a little, for a man feels pretty low just at dawn. Specially low when he realizes he's got enemies as strong as Jerry Staffel and his daddy, Old King Staffel. And when the assayer keeps insisting his ore is worthless even though he can *see* streaks of silver in it, rich and deep and heavy. And when he gets beat up and run out of town every time he shows his nose, and when it looks like no break in the world will ever give him the money to get the girl he loves. Swell girls like Storm Kilday have to have money. They go together like, well, like Ham and Eggs, or maybe Smith and Wesson.

The water in the bucket was froze solid, but I got a fire going in the pot bellied little stove, chipped out some of the stuff and put it in the coffee pot to melt. I didn't mind the cold so much—I'd been raised in upper New York State—but the lonesomeness and the hard knocks were about to get me, I'll admit, and I was feeling pretty blue.

Then I heard it. Faint, muffled, came the voice, "Hello, inside. Anybody to home?" And when I stood there, thinking maybe I'd been alone so much I was hearing things, it came again, more muffled, weaker than ever. "Inside, there, can you help me?"

THE first thing I thought was: It's another trap of Jerry Staffel's. It wasn't the first time I'd wished for a gun lately! You see, my daddy had a gun accident when I was just a kid. He killed a man, and they hanged him for it. And before he went to the gallows he made me promise never to own a gun, and I promised. So I expect I am about the only man in Utah that hasn't got one. Well, anyway, I picked up a good oak club out of the firebox, and slipped the heavy bar from the door, and opened it just a crack.

I called, "Who's there and what do you want?"

"Traveler," came back the muffled voice, "and if you got a knife come get me off this horse." He talked sort of funny, like he had some of them Spanish castanets in his hand. He'd say a word, then there'd be that clackety-clackety-clacking noise, followed by another word. I opened the door a little wider, so I could make him out.

His horse's breath made clouds of steam in the cold air. It stood there, tired and dispirited, like it had come a long way, front legs far apart, head down between them. At first I thought the man in the saddle was an Indian, for he looked like nothing else than a dummy swaddled in blankets. There was a blanket over his head and shoulders, and a handkerchief over his face, and more blankets wrapped about his body, and others about each leg. You couldn't even see his hands, and the reins were looped around the horn of the saddle, loose like. And sticking all over the saddle, and all over the mummified figure was frost and icicles!

I said, "All right, mister, light and come in. There's a fire inside."

"I — *clackety-clack* — can't — *clackety-clack*—get off—*clackety-clack!*"

Off in the pines a hunting owl

boomed sorrowful like, the way they do at dawn when the hunting is over, and right in plain sight a rabbit went scampering across the clearing, and a coyote slid on its haunches and stopped, and trotted back into the brush, steaming from its mouth.

It was getting real light, and I saw the fellow was stuck in the saddle, all right, not only stuck, but tied. I went out in the snow, and fumbled for my knife. He was wound round and round with a hair rope, like the reatas the Mexes use way down south. He must have sensed the knife, for he clackety-clacked out a few words asking me not to cut the rope but just to untie it. So I did. It was hard work, too, for though it was knotted loosely, it had been wet, and ice still clung to it.

The blankets, frozen like that, meant only one thing. This fellow, whoever he was, had blundered onto Devil's Drink. That's a mountain creek about eight miles south of my place, back toward Canton, and it fools lots of people and even animals in the winter. The ice looks firm and solid enough, and is, in toward the shore, but out in the center it must be fed by a warm spring because it won't hold so much as a coyote.

I got him unwound and stepped back. He sort of tottered, straining to get off, and suddenly danged if he didn't tumble toward me. Me, having only one good arm, I couldn't stop him, and he sprawled in the snow and lay still. The horse nickered and pawed at the snow.

I had a lot of trouble dragging him inside. He was a sight, that fellow was. I got the blankets off him somehow, and his clothes were partially frozen, partially wet from the heat of his body. I had a quart of Old Taylor in the cupboard, and a slug of this made him open his eyes. It trickled through his cold-blued lips, and some of it rolled on down onto his handlebar mustaches and off onto his chin. He opened his eyes then and grinned with them, yes, grinned with his eyes. They were as blue as his lips.

"L-l-l-l-tle d-d-damp in your c-c-c-country, p-p-partner," he managed and closed his eyes. I peeled off a sheepskin coat, and his fleece lined gloves. I remember thinking to myself that this was one of the fattest cowpunchers I'd ever seen, and about that time I came to his gun belt.

THE gunbelt and the holster were handcarved, Mexican work, I'd say, and the big Colt hanging there had a lot of filigree work inlaid in the cold black plates. I touched it, and those blue eyes came open with a snap, and the blue lips snarled something over the chattering teeth. I never saw a man change so quick in my life. First he'd been there on the floor by the stove, passed out from cold and exposure, about half dead. Then I'd touched his gun and he'd snarled at me like a wolf, tensed like a steel spring.

"S-s-sorry," he muttered, and danged if he didn't sit up! He upended the bottle, holding it careful with both hands, and I noticed then how black his fingers were. If they weren't frozen they were badly nipped, and I told him so. Well, sir, he played his aces then, aces

as far as I'm concerned. He asked me would I mind taking care of his horse, that he could manage himself.

I got a good windtight shed I used to use for my own horse, before somebody run him off and shot him, so I led his tired horse into it and unsaddled him. The horse was a big rawboned roan, worn travel-thin, and lifting off the saddle I was right curious. It was double rigged, which meant Texas, and it had a saucer sized horn, hand carved and ornamented fenders and tapederos. Remembering the hair rope it wasn't hard to tell where my half frozen visitor came from. He was a long way from home. That was a border rig, Mexican, if I ever saw one. I threw a blanket over the roan and picked up the morrals and bed roll, both wet, and went back into the house.

He was practically sitting on the stove. He'd put my blankets around him, and built up the fire, and his teeth had stopped chattering a little. And he'd gone out and got a pan full of snow and was rubbing his feet and hands in it! Beneath them blankets he was naked as a jaybird, and it was quite a shock to see how blamed skinny he was. It wasn't flesh that made him look fat! That pile of clothes he'd been wearing steamed and smoked on a stool beside the redhot stove. He'd thrown a handful of coffee in the water and it was smelling fine.

Naturally I asked him how come he was soaking wet, and just as I thought he'd tried to cross Devil's Drink in the dark and gone in. He said he'd been riding from Canton to Hereford, which is the Staffel town about as far north as Canton is south. He didn't tell me why he was riding at night and I didn't ask him, figuring it was none of my business. I did tell him I was Eph Jones, and when I asked him his name he had another one of them shaking fits getting it out. It sounded like Tom to me, and that's what I began calling him.

He explained he'd worked hard tying them blankets on like that, figuring he could easy work out of them when he wanted to. But with frost bitten fingers, and the hair rope wringing wet, he'd been out of luck, poor devil!

He was a right tophand with a knife and fork. It was at the breakfast table that he noticed me wincing when I used my right arm. Polite like, he laughed and said, "Eph, it looks to me like you fell down that mine of yours you been talking about."

"You might say," I told him grimly, "I fell down a town. The town of Hereford. Couple of fellows beat me up last time I rode in."

"Ain't you got no gun?" he asked. So I told him. His mouth came open and his eyes spread wide like he'd never heard the like, and I guess he hadn't, but he did and said a funny thing. He shook his head sadly, and he said, "Eph, sometimes I'm like your old man, I wish to God I'd never seen nor heard of a gun." Then he sort of sighed, and shook his head, and the first thing I knew he was standing beside me feeling along my right forearm.

"Maybe you don't know it," he said, "but this arm is sure fractured. Sit still."

He took a butcher knife and went over to the wood box. Twenty minutes later I was a little white about the sore mouth and there was sweat on my head, but my arm was set and splinted. He'd been sort of prodding me about my troubles, and the first thing you know I began cutting loose.

Outside came a halloo, "Oh, Effie, Effie!"

I pushed her aside with my foot and jerked the door open. A gun exploded almost in my face.

I GOT red in the face I reckon and his mustaches bristled and he moved over to where his gun was hanging. I damned the caller, and explained. "It's a damned Piute squaw that's took a liking to me. Danged if she ain't worser than a hydrophoby skunk, always dropping in and cleaning up the place so I can't find nothing."

Then she hammered at the door and there was nothing else to do. I went and opened it. She was standing there taking off her snowshoes, and she had a shotgun over one shoulder and three fat rabbits lying at her feet.

Tom chattered, "Close the door, Eph, I'm freezing to death." Then she stepped in. His teeth quit chattering and his eyes got bigger than they'd been before. He stood there staring at her, and all at once he clutched the blanket around his shoulders and said, "Hell's bells, you said a Piute squaw!"

She laughed and set the gun in the corner, her black eyes not missing a thing, I'll tell you, from my splinted arm to the pile of drying clothes. She said, "It's a game, mister. I call him Effie and he calls me squaw. He's too dumb to introduce us. I'm Piute all right. Tilli-sana-wachee, that's me, but just call me Tilly. Everybody does."

She was over by the stove then, undoing her leggings. She'd been wearing a deerskin skirt, pretty short, and the leggings came up pretty high. That was the way with Tilly, she had no modesty. Me, I was used to it, but as she kept on unwrapping those danged leggings, higher and higher, and more and more of her bronze legs came into view, you could hear poor Tom breathing all over the cabin.

She tossed them aside, and unwrapped a scarf, and took off a sheepskin coat. Underneath it she had on a store sweater, tight, too, that sort of called attention more than ever to the way she was put together. Funny thing, I never paid Tilly much mind, but hearing Tom having a spasm, practically, maybe I looked at her slender, lithe body a little closer. She was all right. Course, a little thin compared to Storm Kilday, my girl over in Hereford, but all there.

She sort of smoothed the sweater and wiggled down into the skirt slow and deliberate, and I heard gulping, choking sounds and looked at Tom just in time to see the last of my Old Taylor disappearing down his throat.

Well, Tilly went on about her business, taking my broom and brushing up and making the bunk, and shaking out Tom's clothes and putting on more water. All the time she cleaned the three rabbits she hummed and sang Indian songs, and after while I saw it was no use talking to Tom for he couldn't take his eyes off her. After while I said, "Tilly lives with her folks up in the valley. She went to mission school, that's how come she can talk so well. But at heart she's a danged interfering female. Always trying to take care of me."

"He's so stubborn and hard headed," she said, without looking at us, "somebody has to."

And Tom put in, "I ain't much on pretty speeches, Tilly, but I'd like right smart having a fine young girl like you looking after me!"

"You can have her," I snapped and was sort of sorry. Tilly was good to me.

"He's not interested in me," she snapped back, disregarding me and speaking to Tom. "He's got a girl! A big fat washed out blonde named Storm, over in Hereford."

Now that made me sore. Storm wasn't fat, she was just plump, that's all. So I said, "Now you leave Storm out of this, Tilly! I'm going to marry her—"

"Storm," said Tom, quiet like, "Storm. That's a peculiar name for a woman. I'll bet you I can describe a dame with a name like that." I glared at him but he began talking and I guess I quit staring. It was uncanny! He described Storm to a Tee! Even Tilly quit cleaning rabbits and stood up staring at him with her hands on her slim hips and her red mouth open.

TOM laughed. "I'm cheating," he admitted. "A fellow I once knew described her to me. They ain't many Storms, so I took a chance on it being her. This fellow that told me about her, down south a bit, mentioned a friend of hers, too, a big tall skinny ranny with a patch over one eye."

"That's her brother," I told him. "His name is Jack Kilday. He's a blacksheep, a gun man. He works for King Staffel. Spends most of the time hanging around Hereford in the winter time. His sister, Storm, is singing at the Ace High. Jerry Staffel, King's son, owns that. Storm don't even speak to her brother!"

Tilly put in, "That's the outfit that keeps this stubborn fool all beat up."

Tom admired her with his eyes, and she came over and sat down at the table and began talking. She had a habit, Tilly did, of rubbing her chin and throat when she talked. The top two or three buttons of the store sweater came loose and the smooth bronze skin above her breasts slid into view with a suddenness that sort of smacked a man right between the eyes; and again it looked to me like this feller Tom wasn't following the story very close. I kicked her in the shin beneath the table and eyed all that skin with a scowl, and she laughed in my face, and sort of preened herself and stuck her chest out so that the sweater covered even less than before! Tom nearly fell off his chair.

"Let me get this straight," he said, sort of choking. "You come in here and squat on some land that used to be King Staffel's range?" I nodded, still glaring at Tilly. "He don't pay you no mind until you run a shaft back in the rock and dig out some samples. Then you take them into Hereford to an assayer named Taylor."

Tilly put in, "He's a crook. He's Staffel's man."

Tom beamed at her. "Then before you got a report," he turned back to me, "Jerry Staffel, the Staffel son, tries to buy your homestead." I nodded. "When you wouldn't sell, Taylor returns a report that your mine is worthless?"

"But it isn't," I said, and went to the cupboard for ore samples. Tom looked at them a long time, and he took a fork and pried at a streak of silver.

Then he said, "Hmmmm. Me, I'm no rock man, but even if this

here was lead it looks like there's enough of it to be valuable. How come you don't take it to another assayer, or send it away?"

And it was Tilly that told it. Coming from her it did sound impossible, but me, I was going through it, I *knew* it was true. You see, I'm halfway in between Canton, the county seat, and Hereford, eight miles from each. The Staffels run the whole county, always have, politically and every other way. To get to either town, I got to walk, because like I mentioned before, right after I git paydirt, somebody stole my horse out of my shed and killed it.

It is hard to stomach that even men that work for the government can be crooked, but the thing is, being a postmaster is sort of a political job after all. I'd mailed letters in both Canton and Hereford, and never got no answer to them for the simple reason they never left town. The postmasters would give them to their political boss, who was Jerry Staffel, the son! I didn't carry a gun, I couldn't and keep my promise.

So as soon as I'd get to either town somebody would pick a fight with me, usually Jack Kilday, Storm's no good brother—though she wasn't responsible for him!—and someone else would pitch in and I'd get pretty bad beat up! Why, sometimes I even had to depend on Tilly to bring out supplies!

Tom said, sort of curious like, "And what does your girl advise you to do?"

"Storm?" snapped Tilly, like it was a bad taste in her mouth, what with her being so jealous. "She is so frightened for him! So frightened! She wants Effie to sell out complete to the Staffels and take her away from it all, damn her! And Effie falls for it. He tells her all his plans, he talks everything over with her before he does it! Hell, he wouldn't wipe his nose without asking her advice!"

"Storm's smart," I said defensively. But Tilly just got up and began pacing the cabin floor, her mocassined heels coming down hard enough to make her hips quiver and dance, and I saw Tom was forgetting about my troubles already.

FINALLY he said, "And no matter what you try to do, no matter how you try to get out of the pocket you're in, this here Staffel and his son know your plans?" I guess I looked my amazement, it seemed like he was a clairvoyant or something.

Tilly looked at him, hands on hips, with a meaning look, as if to say. "See? What have I been telling you."

Tom got up sort of slow. He walked over to where his morrals were and opened one and came back with three bottles. "Tequila," he said. "Good to warm up a man's insides. I been riding the snowline so danged long I'm froze. Suppose we sit here and drink a little serious liquor. Then I'll catch a little shuteye, and maybe we'll go in to Hereford and see some folks."

You know, it was funny. I felt like a load had been lifted from my shoulders. Tom was that sort of fellow, capable looking, and the way he even walked on his sore feet was catlike, and I remembered

"You damn' squaw!" cursed Storm. "You've been here all the time. What'd he do with the contract?"

what had happened when I touched his gun earlier. Yes sir, I'd promised my daddy never to possess a gun but I never promised him not to go along with someone that did have one, and someone that could use it. So we sat there and drank and I began to get a glow from the tequila. Tom, he kept telling about things that had happened down in Texas, and Tilly took a few drinks, and loosened the sweater even more, and even did us a parody of a Piute stomp dance that was really funny. I could look at her, all slim, and copper color, with her flashing eyes and red mouth and white teeth, and I tell you it made me think of Storm, and wish I had Storm in my arms and all our troubles were over!

Bye and bye Tom rolled into my bunk and started snoring.

He slept thirty-six hours by the clock.

IT WAS eight o'clock in the night of the second day before Tom got up, and when he did crawl out of the bunk, shaking and shivering, though the stove was glowing cherry red, he was hungry as a wolf.

"Never mind," he said, finishing up what bacon was in the house, and tearing into the last can of beans, "you can get more tomorrow in Hereford." And he asked about Tilly, too, and made the comment that she was about the prettiest piece of woman flesh he'd seen from Guadalajara to here, which was as far as he'd ever gotten north!

"She's an Indian," I shrugged, "but you ought to see my girl, Storm!" And away I went, telling all about how white and rosy pink she was, and her lips always looking moist and parted, and how soft and warm her arms were about a fellow's neck. And when I looked up, old Tom had pushed back from the table and had his head on his chest and his eyes closed. He was snoring.

At ten, after I'd washed the dishes, he put some more blankets on the bunk and crawled under them again. Pretty soon he was hard at it, and dang me if he wasn't still sleeping the next morning when Tilly halloo-ed.

She had a big piece of venison this time, and while she wriggled out of her leggings and jacket her black eyes found my pack and turned inquiringly toward the bunk. "Where you going?" was question one. "And is *he* sick?" was number two.

I shook my head. "We're riding or walking into Hereford," I told her, and "He ain't sick. He's the sleepingest fellow I ever saw!"

About then he opened his eyes and grinned. "Hello, squaw," he said. "What you bring us to eat this morning? Venison, hanh? Reckon you can turn your head and put a thick slab of it in a skillet while I get into my britches?"

She could and did. He ate three thick steaks, beaming at Tilly all the time. "Now Tilly," he grinned, picking at his teeth with a five inch clasp knife, "is my idea of a good provider. On account of not having no dessert, a little kiss would be sweet enough for an old feller like me." And danged if he didn't reach over and pick her up and set her on his knees and kiss her, right enthusiastic.

Sure, it wasn't any of my business, but it looked to me like Tilly didn't fight her best. And when she put her arms around his neck and helped, and that short skirt began sliding way up over her bronze knees, well, I started to go outside and leave them alone, pretty mad, I'll tell you. But Tom stopped me, set her on the floor, smacking his lips, and she looked over and laughed in my face.

"If we're going," he said, "I reckon we better git. I got a little clothes changing to do first." He went over to his morrals and shucked off his shirt. I began prettying myself up—after all I was going to see Storm!—and when I finished, Tom was ready, too.

He didn't look like the saddle bum who'd rolled in the snow at my front door not long ago! He'd slid into a close fitting white silk shirt, with a little black string tie. And over it he wore a Mexican *jaqueta* of soft, tanned skin, caught at the waist with a belt made out of silver *pesos,* making it into a blouse. The sleeves were ornamented with colored feather work, and on the back was a big Mexican eagle, the national emblem, all worked out in colors. I tell you it was swell. And Tilly thought so, too.

TOM stuck his head out the door and right away his teeth began chattering. He sure hated to go out into the cold! He made me go get his roan, and when I got back he had both his legs blanket wrapped, and had on all those clothes again till he looked big and fat. It took me and Tilly both to hoist him on his horse.

Then he wrapped a blanket over his head, and a handkerchief over his face, and another pair of blankets about his shoulders. And he insisted I take the hair rope and wind him round like a coccoon. This time, he said, he wouldn't fall in no water and get frost bit so his hands wouldn't work. He was loose enough so with a little contriving he could get himself out of the blankets, but he was tight enough to keep out the cold.

"I wish," he groaned, sort of muffled, "I'd a thought to tie the stove in here with me. Crawl up here behind, Effie, and we'll go to Hereford."

Tilly did a funny thing then. She came out and laid her hands, both of them, on Tom's leg, and said, "You sure it's going to work out, mister?"

He just laughed, hollow like, inside all them blankets, and sort of jeered, "I'll see he don't get hurt, squaw. Reckon you can have some hot venison ready for us?" She reckoned she could, and we trotted off through the winter sunshine, that wasn't much warmer than a winter wind.

All the eight miles I worried. "After all, I didn't know much about Tom, and here I was with my arm fractured, without a gun, going in where I'd been warned to keep away, and depending on him to take care of me. Sure, I was ashamed of it, but I tell you, I was desperate. Just picturing how happy me and Storm could be if everything was all right, why, shoot, I was willing to try anything.

(Continued on page 82)

Wild Wagon

LOLITA, the dance hall girl, brought out a special bottle that was better than the red-eye on the bar downstairs. The thin garment she had donned flared with her lithe movements and revealed silken, skin-tight undies about the intriguing swell of her hips. When she poured two drinks, tempting olive tinted flesh showed above the contours of her pulsing bosom.

"Slim" McCann's eyes were half closed and he muttered thickly. He wasn't nearly as drunk as he seemed and he was watching Lolita's liquid, sloe-black eyes. Occasionally he glanced at her

He grabbed the man's wrist just as the gun started to come out.

Wheels

By LARRY DUNN

Slim was certain that the girl, Lolita, was responsible for the leaks concerning the gold shipments. What hadn't occurred to him was that trying to get information from Lolita was twice as dangerous as playing with dynamite

other enticements and his spine tingled in spite of himself. He was sprawled on the sofa in the room that made him sick with its musky smell of cheap perfume.

When she had downed her own drink, Lolita came over and sank down beside him. She slid a small, warm hand to the back of his neck. Her nearness stirred him and made him nervous with a desire to take the red-lipped girl into his arms.

He judged that Bart Owner must have yielded to that same urge. And Hodge Hopkins. They had been freight skinners on the Dev-

il's Tail the same as Slim McCann. Both now were dead in the whirling waters of the Devil's Tail river. They had been with this Lolita shortly before their freight wagons had started down from Snag Mountain to Stubtown with consignments of gold from the rich Big Basin stamp mill.

Slim had learned that much, and he wasn't honing to join them in the Devil's Tail. But he had sworn to himself that he would get at the hombre behind the murderous holdups of the wagons carrying the gold. "Wolf" Callow's owl-hooters pulled the jobs, but Wolf Callow had not the brains to do more than stage occasional raids on the cow ranges. And Wolf Callow had struck only at the freight wagons carrying the gold, although the consignments were loaded secretly and at odd times.

So, behind Wolf Callow and the girl Lolita there had to be a keener mind. Roaring Stubtown had many such minds, but the murders of Owner and Hopkins went back to Lolita. Slim downed his drink and mumbled sleepily, letting his arms go at last about the girl.

"You like Lolita veree much?" she crooned softly into his ear.

"Like Lolita?" he said with drunken gravity. "Yuh betcha! I ain't never seen a filly that could beat yuh for looks."

"You kees Lolita then!" she said breathlessly, both her arms suddenly locking his neck and bringing his hard-lipped mouth to her own.

Her soft bosom flattened and her heart pulsed against him. Her thin robe fell away and her warm, rounded thighs were brushing his lanky knees as her lips parted. Slim hadn't meant it to be quite this way, but nature had so fashioned Lolita that the quivering of her luscious body made Slim forget his purpose for the moment.

His hands upon her yielding back strained her to him. He couldn't then for a time keep in mind that this was the way it must have been with the two dead freighters. Lolita gave maddening response to his caresses—

WHEN she stood up, sighing and breathless, and poured him another drink, Slim McCann hated himself. She was beside him again. Then it came.

"Slim ees love Lolita much?" she murmured, dark eyes heavy-lidded. "Maybe eet ees he would take Lolita away. Next time when the gold ees come down in Slim's wagon? Yes?"

Slim's lean body tensed. Thus far he had read sign rightly on the freight murder trail.

"Well, mebbe so," he grunted thickly. "Reckon yuh could git ready by then for the long trail?"

Lolita's eyes sparkled with triumph. This drunken freight skinner was about to give up the information she was after.

"When ees eet the next gold ees come?" she said.

"Lemme see," considered Slim. "Next time on my wagon a week come Thursday."

He reached for the special bottle, but Lolita's arms had locked him tightly.

"Slim ees maybe love Lolita?"

"Um-m-m-m!" he grunted with her vibrant lips pressing his mouth.

And from the bedlam of the bar-

room and dance floor below came a cry that cleared all the fog from Slim's senses.

"Lemme go! I tell you I must find Slim McCann!"

"Up them stairs, ma'am!" obliged a heavy voice in sudden silence over the barroom. "First door t' your right, but I reckon yuh'd best not—"

Slim was freeing Lolita's arms, wrenching her away from him. Resisting, the girl tripped, toppled backard. Sleek, bare thighs, tapering to shadowed silk flashed golden in the lamp-light as her thin robe whirled apart and she screamed.

Slim recalled too late that the flimsy door had no lock. There were quick steps and the door flew open. A willowy girl with bits of the sky for eyes and coiled yellow hair swayed in the opening. Her pretty oval face was white, then it slowly flushed to scarlet as she took in the sprawled figure of Lolita on the floor and coatless Slim McCann. Slim's belted .45 hung over the back of a chair.

"You? Slim McCann!" The words came with a lash of scorn in the tense voice of the girl. "And they told me that maybe you could help me!"

Lolita rose slowly to her feet, pulling the robe around her luscious curves. Her black eyes flashed and her hand darted to her silk brassiere. A sharp jeweled dagger appeared and Lolita emitted a hissing scream as she sprang at the girl in the doorway.

"Stop it, you damn' fool!" grated Slim, moving with a lithe quickness that carried him to the two girls.

HE HAD no time to attempt to seize the mad girl's knife hand. The best he could do was make it a straight punch with his fist to the soft flesh under her ear. Lolita cried out and crumpled.

The girl in the doorway hadn't moved.

"Maybe I ought to thank you, Slim McCann!" she said scathingly. "But I don't feel that way!" Then her voice broke into a sob.

"And while you've been here pleasurin' yourself, Daddy Dorn's freight wagon is in the Devil's Tail! Wolf Callow got him and the mules went off the cliff! Shorty Masters was with him and he got away! But I can't expect anything from you now, Slim McCann!"

She turned, starting to run down the stairs into the barroom. At the top she tripped and a bearded hombre, much the worse for redeye, caught her in his huge arms at the bottom.

But instead of releasing her, he cursed jubilantly into the silence that had fallen.

"Damme t' hell! Who'd ever expect to see such a pretty critter in the Black Jack? An' she jumps right inter my arms!"

Mary Dorn's corn yellow hair tumbled from its coiled knot into a lustrous mass over her shoulders. She didn't speak or cry out, but clawed furiously at the bearded face of the tough. He roared with ribald laughter and holding her off easily with one hand, deliberately ripped away her shirt to expose the little bandeau that protected her firm young breasts.

"Let 'er go, yuh damn' polecat!" roared Slim McCann as he hurled himself from the stairs

above, not waiting for his gun.

Slim's hard, lean weight struck the tough with an impact that carried both him and Mary Dorn to the muddied floor. The girl's skirts whirled high and a gasp of appreciation ran around the barroom.

Mary had perhaps the neatest ankles and the trimmest legs in all of Devil's Tail county. Slim and white, they were revealed above her black stockings to lacy whiteness of the kind of underthings range girls wear. Nothing of silk, but there wasn't an hombre in the barroom who didn't appreciate the difference between her clean fineness and the tinsel fripperies of the dance hall girls.

The collision knocked the breath from Slim, but it didn't prevent him crossing a hard right to his opponent's chin as they lay on the floor. The tough swore heavily, rolled over, and his gun came from its holster. Unarmed, Slim stared into the round hole of death, almost feeling the lead cutting into his innards.

A smaller calibred gun exploded. The tough's .45 belched fire, too, but the bullet went wild. The tough fell to his back, dead enough, with one eye gone where a slug had hit his temple.

A hoarse mutter of surprise went around the room.

Slim got Mary to her feet. He was looking at "Diamond" Reagan, the thin, dark-faced gambler who ran the games for the Black Jack. Reagan was pushing his .38 back into his shoulder holster without any trace of emotion.

"Reckon I owe yuh one for that," muttered Slim. "Come on, Mary, let's get out."

THERE were two score tough hombres looking on. "Pinky" Duval, who owned the Black Jack, blinked small eyes over his fat, pinkish cheeks. He was nodding approval with a smile for Reagan.

"A lady's a lady, even in the Black Jack," Duval said with a short laugh. "The drinks are on the house."

Slim got Mary through the batwing doors. He took her arm as they crossed the muddy street between the plank walks. Then she freed herself.

"I'll go on alone from here, Slim McCann, if you please," she said. "Reckon you may want-a go back."

Slim had often watched Mary Dorn, but had never before said more than "howdy" to her. With trembling fingers she was holding her torn waist over her heaving white bosom and her eyes still scorned him for what she had seen in Lolita's room. Her red lips were drawn into a thin line.

"Mebbe so I'd best go back," Slim said quietly. "But not for the reason you're thinkin' on. It's too late to save Dad Dorn."

He had too much stiffness of pride to tell her why he had been in Lolita's room. That could wait until he succeeded or failed in uncovering the hombre behind Wolf Callow's murderous holdups.

"You're as much of a beast as the rest of them!" flared Mary angrily. "It ain't too late to get Wolf Callow!"

She turned and ran along the plank walk. Slim knew suddenly that Mary Dorn was the only girl he would ever love. Her scorn had made him feel sick and empty bel-

He had no time to reach the girl's knife hand.

lied, something that never before had happened to Slim.

When he got back to the batwings, several girls were quitting for the night and crossing over to the boarding house where they lived. Lolita was not with them.

He saw Lolita over the batwings. She was talking with the gambler, Diamond Reagan and with Pinky Duval. They were at the back end of the bar. Surveying all of the hombres in the Black Jack, it struck Slim that the Black Jack was the meeting place of all the owlhooters and gunnies infesting the newly opened Devil's Tail country.

There was not a single law-abiding citizen of Stubtown in the place. There wasn't a doubt in his mind now but that all of the crimes of rustling and raiding in the new Devil's Tail range and gold country were brewed right here.

Even if Lolita hadn't pointed to a yellowed calendar hanging on the wall, Slim could readily have guessed that she was imparting to Reagan and Duval the information she had wormed out of him about the next time his freight wagon would be toting gold from Snag

Mountain. Duval was nodding and smiling.

"So that's why Reagan was so damn' handy with that snipe gun o' his," muttered Slim. "If I'd have got lead poisoned, then I wouldn't be bringin' down the gold like I told Lolita."

He swung his lean length through the batwings and went back to Lolita's room for his gun.

"You need a drink, McCann," offered Pinky Duval as he came back down the stairs.

"Mebbe so you're right," muttered Slim. "I'm right sorry I had t' hit yuh, Lolita," he told the inky-eyed girl, who was standing with Duval and Reagan.

"Eet ees, what you say, hunkee dorree," the girl smiled at him. Her look said she was the brand of female critter that would go for an hombre who beat his woman.

Slim saw Marshal Nathan sprawled drunkenly in a chair. He was all the law there was in Stubtown or in the Devil's Tail country. He didn't amount to the hoot of an owl because he always started drinking before breakfast, Pinky Duval supplying the redeye.

Slim downed his drink and thanked Diamond Reagan again for saving his life. The gambler killer smiled thinly and said, "I'd have gunned him for that girl, Mary Dorn, anyway."

Slim had another drink and went out. He could feel the eyes of the two men and Lolita on his back. He was convinced now that Reagan and Duval were the brains behind the gold holdups on the Devil's Tail freight trail. And it was a toss up whether Wolf Callow's killers would be waiting for his wagon at the top of the narrow canyon trail a week from the coming Thursday.

There was moonlight and Slim could see the snake-like wagon trail where it had been zigzagged up the five hundred foot bluff behind the Black Jack saloon. The saloon was built against the cliff directly under it.

SLIM McCANN'S high-wheeled Concord freighter creaked up the narrow trail toward the top of the grade coming from Snag Mountain. Slim rested the mules before reaching the summit where the road dipped steeply on the curving incline toward Stubtown.

"If Wolf Callow's ridin', reckon he'll be waitin' below the top o' the grade like he did with them others," said Slim, talking to the mules.

For it was up here that Owner and Hopkins and Dad Dorn had gone to their death in the Devil's Tail river. The black waters of the river boiled and churned through the canyon nearly a thousand feet below. The wagon trail here was a powder blasted shelf, barely more than the breadth of the wagon. There were cuts in the wall every mile or so for passing.

Except for occasional splits in the rock, the canyon wall rose sheer above the road another thousand feet. A few hard horse trails broke through the wall at intervals, and it was over these that Wolf Callow and his outlaws rode to some hideout back in the Malpais of the mesa at the top of the mountain.

It was late afternoon, and it was the Thurday on which Slim had drunkenly confided to Lolita he would be bringing down gold from

Snag Mountain. He was not toting gold, and the Big Basin stamp mills would ship no more until help had been sent by the U. S. marshal at Butte to clean out the holdup killers.

Slim hadn't intended to be carrying gold, anyway. But his wagon was heavily loaded, although the freighters usually came back light after taking in supplies to the mining town of Big Basin. Slim had seen to that, and he was smiling grimly as the mules rested and he looked down into the oily, roiled blackness of the Devil's Tail river.

"Reckon Mary Dorn has me branded by this time as the lowest kind of a varmint," he said. "It's a helluva country where you can't stir up enough law or honest citizens to get a posse out after Dad Dorn's gulchers."

Mary Dorn had tried to arouse what few good citizens there were in the boom camp of Stubtown. They were too far outnumbered by the tougher element and too weak-spined to risk lead in their briskets for the girl of the murdered old freighter.

She hadn't appealed to Slim McCann again, and he was glad of that. For he had his own plan worked out. Now he had one .45 holstered and another one lying on the seat beside him.

THE four mules quit heaving and Slim freed the brake lock. His steel-gray eyes swept the rifts in the upper canyon wall, seeking the gleam of metal or movement that would tell him he was being watched. He saw neither. But suddenly a startled blue jay flew out at the top of the grade just ahead, squawking with anger.

"Company ahead, yuh jennies," muttered Silm to the mules. "Here's wishin' yuh luck an' hopin' you an' me all come through without punctured hides."

He clucked and the loaded wagon creaked heavily up the last hundred yards of the grade to the summit. Slim's broad mouth became a tightly slashed line. He made sure the six-gun was in its place on the seat.

Both his feet were set behind the high dashboard, and they were resting on sheet metal plates put in place before he had rolled from Big Basin. They afforded good protection for him as long as the wagon would stay on the narrow trail.

He judged Wolf Callow and his owlhooters would be blocking the trail just below the summit where the road wound sharply around a shoulder of the wall. For it was at this shoulder, some two hundred yards below the summit that the other freight wagons had been held up, then dumped into the Devil's Tail.

The pitch over the summit was just ahead.

The cracking report of a rifle rang out, echoing from the canyon walls. It was beyond the summit. A man's voice cried out sharply as though he had been hit and the rifle exploded again.

"Git up!" snapped Slim at the mules, swinging the long whip with a snap that joined a second echoing rifle shot.

Because of the creak and groan of the wagon, Slim could hear nothing now but the dying echoes of two rifle shots. The four-mule team

topped the summit. Ahead half a dozen hard, slouch-hatted hombres were trying to control horses apparently spooked by the shooting.

Slim was sure there were other riders out of sight beyond the rock shoulder. Then he saw Wolf Callow, a squat figure more like a huge toad in the saddle than the Wolf he was called.

Slim slowed at the summit, setting the brake partly, his one hand gathering the reins and his other seeking the six-gun on the seat. He clucked at the mules, freed the brake, taking in the line of mounted owlhooters squarely across the narrow road.

"Hold 'er, McCann!" rang out Wolf Callow's command. "Yuh git yore paws up, an' brake 'er down or yuh git a bellyful o' lead!"

"Yeah!" yelled Slim. "An' the Devil's Tail gets a bellyful o' skunks this time!"

He let out a yipping shout at the mules and dropped below the level of the high dash, peering over. The full weight of the heavy wagon jammed down upon the heels of the wheel team and the tongue rammed the doubletrees of the lead mules.

"Look out!" shouted Wolf Callow. "Plug them lead mules! The damn' fool's goin' to try ridin' it out!"

The mules broke into a gallop, then the wagon was pushing them into a run. Slim sawed the reins with one hand, holding them to the narrow trail.

"Ten seconds an' it'll be over one way or t'other!" he grated between set teeth as the short guns of the owlhooters started cracking. Lead thudded into the dashboard, zinged into the metal. The four mules were on the dead run now. The nigh leader stumbled and staggered as a bullet nipped him, but he was carried ahead and kept his feet.

A flattened bullet glanced and struck Slim's jawbone and seemed to tear off the side of his face. But his unexpected defiance and the thunder of the heavy freighter wagon stopped the shooting temporarily.

"Git 'hind the shoulder!" yelled Wolf. "He cain't make the turn! Damn' 'im, he'll go over with the gold!"

CLEAR of the gun menace for a few seconds, Slim fought off dizziness from his face wound and laid his weight on the reins. There was no stopping the crowded mules quickly, with the wagon jamming upon them, but Slim got a hard foot on the brake.

He had figured on that shoulder turn and he had doubled the leverage of the holding shoes against the wheels. The big, canvas-topped wagon swung as the wheels locked, sliding, and was within inches of the edge of the drop into the Devil's Tail. Slim threw all of his weight into holding the leaders close to the wall.

"Damn' 'em!" he spat out through the blood in his mouth. "Lemme make that swing, an' I'll roll 'em over the rocks or chase 'em the hell into Stubtown!"

The mules veered to sawing reins and plunged ahead The tipping wagon grated its steel tires as it slid, then it was around the shoulder and headed into a straightaway down grade. A feeling of grim exultation swept through Slim.

She tripped and fell squarely into the arms of an hombre who was much too full of red-eye.

There were a dozen bunched owlhooters on their horses ahead. Undoubtedly they expected to see the wagon plunge into the Devil's Tail on that turn. And Slim had a gun in one hand and was thumbing it, adding its bullets to the death menace of the big wagon roaring down upon the outlaws.

One bearded owlhooter threw up his hands, his horse reared, then both man and horse went rolling into a thousand feet of space above the churning, black river.

"Turn, yuh skunks, an' run for it!" yelled Slim, starting to drop again for the protection of his metaled dash as lead once more whizzed over the mules.

Then, "Great God!" groaned Slim, rearing up and putting all his weight upon reins and brake.

Wolf Callow had turned his men to run for it ahead of the runaway wagon, but there were two figures that could not escape hoofs of the mules and the wild wheels of the freighter. One of these was an owlhooter, whose doubled body proved he was past being harmed.

The other was Mary Dorn, lying limply in the middle of the trail, her yellow hair streaming and her white face toward the oncoming

death. Like a flash, the answer as to how she had come there jumped through Slim's brain.

Those rifle shots and the dead outlaw told him. The girl of Dad Dorn must have set out alone to avenge her father's murder. That could be the only answer to the rifle shots Slim had heard.

As this hit his brain, with the sight of Mary, the girl moved, arose partly, lifting herself on her hand, staring at the mules plunging upon her. Slim's next split second of action was automatic. He fully expected to go into the Devil's Tail with his wagon, doing what he did.

The braked wheels screamed, Slim's full, desperate strength on the reins fairly hurled the nigh lead mule into the inner wall. He had sick emptiness inside as the big wagon slewed and swung partly around. He was sure the rear wheels would go over the edge and drag the mules with it. He started to throw himself from the seat as the nigh leader hit the wall, fell and tangled the feet of the wheel horse behind him.

Through the bedlam of sound made by the scream of the down mule and the sliding wagon, Slim heard Wolf Callow's hard rasping voice.

"Got 'im, by hell! Knowed he wouldn't run down that killin', hellcat gal!"

SLIM had a vague glimpse of Mary Dorn staggering to her feet now, her hands reaching as if she were trying to hold the big wagon on the trail She was in riding breeches, but her wool shirt had been torn off by ruthless hands.

In the space of less than three seconds while his life hung in the balance, it was strange how clearly Slim could see and mark everything. Mary standing there with her bared white arms and shoulders, her tumbling yellow hair all the concealment there was for the sweet curves of her breasts and her slender body.

Then Slim plunged from the wagon seat, landed on the hard rock of the trail and his head seemed to explode into a galaxy of stars. That was all he knew for perhaps many minutes. He didn't know as voices murmured then grew louder in his awakening ears that the blood from his face wound and his crooked position led Wolf Callow and his owlhooters to believe him too dead to be worth the wasting of a bullet.

"Yuh take the gal back t' the hideout!" floated the voice of Wolf Callow. "When I git back from Stubtown t'night, I'm lookin' after her personal!"

Slim's muscles failed to respond to the most desperate effort of his will. He could open his eyes only with an effort. One bearded owlhooter was pulling Mary across the horn of his saddle. She cried out with pain and rage, clawing at his face. The owlhooter laughed raucously and his flat hand struck the girl's head at one side.

Although he couldn't speak, Slim cursed inwardly. The blow stunned Mary, and she drooped as lifelessly as an empty sack. Other owlhooters were swearing because there was no gold in the freight wagon. Slim saw the big wagon had stayed on the trail, the lead mules were down and the wheel

animals were standing, shivering in a tangle of torn harness.

All of his desperate effort failed to bring Slim out of his semi-coma. Even the thought of what would happen to Mary Dorn in the hands of the toad-like Wolf Callow could not overcome the fog in his brain. The fog thickened and he lost consciousness again.

Because of that, Slim did not hear Wolf Callow make a sudden change of plans concerning Mary.

The sun had been low in the West over the Devil's Tail when Slim's senses deserted him the second time. He awoke in the chill of late night in the high mountains. Except for the movement of animals nearby, there was silence on the wagon trail.

Slim discovered he could move slowly. One wheel mule was lying down and the other was still standing, both trapped by their harness and the bodies of the other mules.

He saw by the stars it was after midnight. His first thought was again of Mary and Wolf Callow's promised personal attention on his return from Stubtown. There was no possibility of finding the outlaw hideout in the bewildering mazes of the Malpais running back from the mountain mesa.

Slim uttered low oaths. "Bigod! If Wolf Callow has harmed her, I'll find 'im an' drag 'im to death at the heels of a bronc. But how—?"

It struck him then how he might discover Wolf's hideout, although it might be too late to save Mary from his brutal hands.

"Diamond Reagan! Pinky Duval! That girl Lolita!"

He repeated their names with the slowness of deadly intent, although he knew that in Stubtown he would be but one wounded and weakened hombre against Reagan and Duval, and their many gunnie cohorts.

His strength returned as he moved. He found one of his guns and reloaded it. Next he tackled the tangle of harness about the mules. Dropping the front traces, he got the live team hooked up and in perhaps half an hour the big wagon was moving slowly down the grade on a half set brake toward Stubtown.

SLIM McCANN sat in the wagon seat and watched the front lights go out at the Black Jack saloon. He had stopped on the snake curve trail directly above the saloon building, a distance of about two hundred feet above its roof.

The dancing girls had trooped over to their boarding house. The last of the night's patrons seemed to have left the place, and it was four o'clock in the morning by Slim's big silver watch.

He was sick and shaken, but the feel of his gun warmed him some. Climbing stiffly to the ground, he tied the mule team and eased himself down the trail. When he reached the town level, light showed from the shades of a window at the rear of the Black Jack.

"By all hell, either Pinky Duval or Diamond Reagan will talk!" he said between tight lips. "Once I've got the drop, I'll kill one an' I reckon that'll loosen the other skunk's tongue!"

He judged that Reagan and

(Continued on page 91)

HAT RACK

He married his best friend's widow, and never dreamed that he might be guilty of bigamy. If, by any chance, Single Shot still lived, one or the other of them must die

SINGLE SHOT paused at the watering trough, rubbed his square chin. His squarish young face clouded, and his alkali whitened brows contracted. He wanted to see Sabina, but he wasn't certain that he had a right to. Not until he was sure she was a widow.

He was about to "hallo the house" when he heard a choked cry and then a man grumbling,

There was just that one slug, but that was enough.

"Shucks, Sabina. Business is business."

A stinging slap. Sabina's familiar voice cut in, "Stick to *business!*"

Single Shot was short, but he moved fast. He was in the house before his footsteps could give much warning to those inside.

CROSSES THE RIVER

By E. HOFFMANN PRICE

The blonde woman who struggled with the tall man was lithe and shapely. Her efforts pulled her faded calico dress taut, showing the curve of her hips, and outlining her lovely legs. Her silver blonde hair tumbled in a gleaming cascade as she wrenched free.

Sabina clutched at the faded blue tatters. She barely hid the whiteness of her bosom. Then she saw the newcomer, and so did the big man in the velvet vest.

"Fill your hands, Morgan," Single Shot said, very quietly.

Morgan licked his lips. "If

you're aiming to gun me out, go to it. I ain't slapping leather with no gun slick."

THE banker of Burning Wagon was not yellow; just prudent. The only man in Texas who would have had a chance was Hat Rack Smith; the tall, hatchet faced marshal whose horse had come back alone, thus leaving Sabina exposed to the advances of whoever thought a widow was fair game.

"Get out," Single Shot commanded. "If you want to talk about notes, she'll see you in town. If I was to holler about what you was jest fixing to do with a lone widder, this town'd stake you out on a ant heap, and you know it."

Morgan raised a trembling hand. "Maybe I did git familiar, but—"

"Tearing the clothes offen a gal's back," Single Shot explained, "is more'n playfulness. Now, you renew them notes for her. Hat Rack Smith was a good marshal, and he's still my pardner, even if he is dead."

"Now, look-ee here, Single Shot —I tell you—"

"Y'ain't telling me nothing. You reckoned account she was alone, you could git fresh and she'd be ashamed to holler. But now she's got a witness, and there warn't nothing embarrassing to talk about. Except embarrassing for you, you gol dang skunk. So them notes is renewed, huh?"

Morgan left, red and sweating. He had been nicely cornered.

When he rode away, Sabina sighed. "Thank heaven! I don't know where the fool'd stopped, and all the boys are riding the line."

"He'd not've dared, honey." Single Shot put a comforting arm about her bare shoulders; the first time he had ever been so near to his friend's widow. "He'd not gone further."

"He would have." She choked a sob. This had been the climax to Morgan's six months of hounding her. Now that Hat Rack was gone, the Lazy S was slowly riding to hell. Varmints, cattle thieves, the inefficiency of cowhands who lacked a hard man's supervision had ruined the spread. Sabina could not quite believe that her late husband's friend had effectively cornered her oppressor.

She let him take her to the threadbare sofa. She pillowed her face on his dusty shirt and cried, "Oh, if I only knew! If I could only hope Hat Rack would come back, or if I knew he couldn't!"

Secretly, he had been in love with Sabina ever since she had come from the East to take over a legacy in Burning Wagon; but Hat Rack Smith, his best friend, had married her. And now that she was in his arms, trembling from reaction, he could no longer restrain himself.

He kissed her, stroked her gleaming pale hair. He knew that she was turning to him as she might to an elder brother, but her response made his blood race like a prairie fire.

Then her quickened breathing betrayed her, and so did the slim body that clung ever closer. This wasn't any sister's embrace!

Suddenly, she slipped away, and said, "Please go—I'm afraid—I was terribly upset—we mustn't—"

The flush of breathless response

became deeper. Single Shot's tanned face became ruddy. "Honey — uh — Sabina — Mis' Smith—aw, hell, m'am—mebbe I could sort of help you keep a eye on the Lazy S."

"I know you could." She smiled through her tears. She came closer, and kissed him, lightly. "Now run along. It's awfully nice, knowing that poor Hat Rack's pardner is a sure enough white man."

But as he rode back to town, Single Shot muttered, "Warn't a bit square, me cutting up thattaway, not *knowing* if she's a widder."

THE scars on Hat Rack's horse indicated that the bullets had come from the rear. He had gone out once too often on a lone hunt. He used to say, "Don't need a posse. There's too much noise and talk. . . ."

Single Shot wondered, during those dragging months, who had warned Hat Rack's unknown quarry. The close mouthed marshal never talked nor asked advice. But something had slipped.

Several weeks after Morgan's play for Sabina, a Mexican from across the Border came to the Alamo Bar. His name was Vasco, and he had the cat footed gait of a gun slinger. Single Shot eyed the silver embroidered jacket, the velvet breeches, the carved leather holsters.

"That there hombre," he said to Ab Wilkins, the new marshal, "ain't no false alarm."

"Ever see him before?" Ab stroked his chin whiskers.

"I can tell from the way he carries hisself. Them eyes. Never miss nothing, and look at them hands. Alive as snakes. I wonder what that gent is looking for, and how come he's so far from home."

"Why," challenged Ab, "don't *you* axe him?"

Single Shot shrugged, "'Tain't my business. Not yet." He chuckled and turned to the bar.

Ab declined the gestured invitation. In the bar mirror, Single Shot saw that Ab was striding directly toward Vasco.

"Whiskey, Mike," he said; and to himself, "Ab kin take care of hisself, jest axing lawful questions."

That was a reasonable opinion, but things did not work out that way. An oath exploded from the burr of the marshal's voice and the purring Spanish of Vasco.

"Why, you murdering son of a—!"

Ab was drawing. Vasco's hand was like a rattlesnake darting for a hole. One-two! Colts blazed, a man yelled, and there was a scramble for cover.

Ab was sagging. The Mexican's smoking gun was leveled. His left hand drew a second weapon. "*Caballeros,*" he said. "I came peaceful, and I leave now—steady there, *señor!*"

"Hell," muttered someone, "that's Hat Rack's gun he's got!"

But Single Shot had already seen the familiar weapon. He went into action, and Burning Wagon saw a draw that went into history.

Vasco had too many men to cover. He lost a split second, shifting that gold mounted Colt. Single Shot's gun blazed as it cleared the holster.

Just that one slug. Vasco pitched

"Fill your hands, Morgan," Hat Rack said quietly.

face forward. Single Shot was walking through the haze of gun smoke. He was holstering his gun. Only one shot was needed. That was how he had earned his name. He booted the weapon from Vasco's hand, and knelt.

"Sound off, Spick! Tell the truth, and I'll give you a good funeral. Or else, the coyotes get your carcass."

Blood frothed from Vasco's mouth and stained his black mustache. His swarthy face was gray. But he was a fighting man, and a good one.

"*Señor,*" he croaked, "I have seen good shooting, but not like this."

His pride in finishing like a man made him pay this compliment. "What — do — you — weesh — to know?"

"Did you kill the man that owned that gold mounted gun?"

Vasco's eyes searched Single Shot's hard face. "He was your friend, no?"

"Makes no difference." Single Shot supported Vasco with his crooked arm. "Someone bring him a drink! Quick." Then, to the gunner, "Tell me. You get a good funeral. A mass. Anything the padre gives a gentleman. Otherwise—"

"I believe you, *señor.*" Vasco choked on the slug of whiskey, then recovered a little. "No. I do not know who is the owner. I bought thees gun."

"Where? Tell me. Quick, Vasco!"

MORGAN was among the spectators who crowded around. He snorted, "Huh! A Greaser

wouldn't tell the truth to save his life."

His booming voice blotted out the hoarsely muttered words. Before the dying man could repeat himself, he slumped back against Single Shot's arm. Vasco was through, and the trail was blocked.

"I could knock your head off!" Single Shot picked up the gold mounted Colt. "Sure as hell, this is Hat Rack's gun. Ab didn't make no mistake, except getting hasty."

The next night he rode out to the Lazy S to see Sabina. When he arrived, not a light was burning, and the cowpunchers in the bunk house were snoring lustily.

He knocked, and when he heard a stirring in the ranch house, he said, "Sabina, it's me. I got to see you."

She recognized his voice. "Come in." A few vague sounds, and then, "I declare, I can't find a match! Wait a second—"

"Don't need no light, honey," he said, impulsively barging over the threshold.

She did not try to get out of his arms. She was lonely, and this second ardent embrace was not quite the surprise that the first one had been. And as he kissed her, she snuggled closer, and whispered, "What is it, Single Shot? What's wrong? Tell me!"

He side stepped toward the lounge that he could just distinguish in the gloom, and drew her to his knee as he seated himself.

"Honey, there ain't no more hope. I jest shot it out with a Spick. He had one of Hat Rack's guns."

"Ohhh. . . ." Sabina drew away. The silence that followed was

tense. She choked back a sob. "That means — there isn't — a chance?"

"Reckon not. I don't know what to say."

She listened to his account. It was the catch in Single Shot's voice that cracked her, and released the long dammed flood of tears.

"Oh, now what'll I do? I knew it, right along, but I wouldn't let myself believe—"

Their common grief drew them together. And Sabina was too wrought up to realize what she was doing. Her tear salted lips were seeking his mouth.

"You're the only friend I've got left," she cried.

He knew he ought to break away. Though she was a widow, he had no right to kiss her, so soon after breaking the news. But Single Shot was dizzied by that close embrace. For a long moment they clung lip to lip.

At last she tremulously whispered, "You never fooled me, Single Shot—I knew, all the time—how you felt—and I'm glad now you did—I don't feel so terribly alone—"

"You knowed, all the time?"

"Of course. And the way you kept your place—all these months—I can't ever care for anyone like I did him, but you've been wonderful—helping me with Morgan—and—"

She sighed, and their lips met again. And this time, Single Shot had no more qualms. . . .

THE clock struck two. Sabina murmured, "Honey, you'd better leave. The cook'll be ringing the breakfast bell in a couple hours."

Single Shot slowly rose. "There's two things that's got to be done. You and me is getting married."

"You mean that?"

"Only way I kin take care of you right. But it won't look exactly proper. You ain't had any time to be in mourning or anything."

"I'm alone, and I need someone to help me with the Lazy S."

"There'd be talk, darling. That'd lead to trouble if I heard it. So we'll ride away on the Q.T. And we'll announce it next spring, when it'll look proper."

"I'm so glad you feel that way about it. I—we—we were both . . . well . . . giddy, a couple hours ago."

"Now you git packed up. Now. Tonight."

"What's the other thing we're going to do?"

"That's something *I'm* doing, honey," he gravely said.

"What?"

"Guess."

She shook her head. "Tell me. I'm too shaky to think."

"I got Hat Rack's gun. I can't have you onless I settle the skunk that bushwhacked him. Some Spick in town'll end up by telling me where Vasco come from. They liked the way I gave Vasco a good funeral. With music and a barbecue. That'll be enough to work on."

They rode into what remained of the night, and all of the following day. Sabina had left a note for the ramrod, saying she was going out of town to raise some more money.

A week later, they pulled into

Las Tinajas, not far from the Rio Grande. The saddle mounts and the pack horse were exhausted. Sabina gestured toward the lights of the town ahead, and said, "It's been wonderful, just us two in the *malpais*. I reckon the next town'll be far enough away."

"We're gettin' married right now. This is plenty far from Burning Wagon. I'll boot the jedge from his supper."

This he said as they rode down the dusty main street of the old town. Most of the houses were dobe, with unsquared cottonwood rafters to support the flat roofs of clay and withes.

They found the judge. He wiped the gravy from his mustache, called for his gray haired wife as a witness, and set to work. The job was done before the barefooted Mexican *criada* had set out two extra plates.

"Now kiss yore bride, young feller, and you and the missus put yoreselves around some chuck," he invited, casting Sabina an admiring glance.

Later, the judge, despite Single Shot's protests, accompanied them to the hotel.

"Killing us with kindness," Sabina sighed, when the old fellow left. She glanced about the barren little room. "Looks like a palace!"

She laid out that one threadbare silk gown. As she pulled the dusty blouse over her head, and wriggled out of her riding skirt, Single Shot said, "Honey, I'm going out to buy you some things, whilst you're getting prettied up. I seen a light in the genrul store, and—"

"Oh, wait till tomorrow," she cut in, and turned to blow out the lamp.

The yellow flame blinked out, and all he could see was a white shape in the gloom. Moonlight reached in through the window, but it did not quite touch her.

HIS first thought, when he heard the sound at the door, was that some of the Mexicans of the town were lurking in the hall to serenade the newlyweds until the groom bought them a drink. That warned him, and so did Sabina's exclamation. At the first hinge squeal, he leaped toward her, to shield her from some playful drunk's intrusion. He'd forgotten to bar the door.

It kicked in. A man was at the threshold; a tall, lean man who was silhouetted by the murky glow of a distant hall light. His face was shadowed, but there was no mistaking that figure, nor the swiftness of his gesture as he croaked, "'Reach for 'em, you skunk!"

It was Hat Rack Smith. The shock paralyzed Single Shot. He could not have drawn, even if he had wanted to. And whatever Sabina thought, she was quicker than either man. Her cry had barely left her lips when she was between the two. "Hat Rack! Don't! Put up that gun—you don't understand—"

"Git out from behind that woman," said the voice from the dead. "And come out where the light's even."

"You fools," Sabina cried, "whoever lives through this, I'll hate him for life. Hat Rack—he's got your gun. That's why he thought you were dead. He knew

—we knew—you must be dead."

She reached behind her, and jerked the weapon from the holster. Hat Rack recognized it. He holstered his new Colt. He slumped, making him more stooped than ever, and his hatchet face became gray. Slowly, he stalked into the room, and sank into a chair.

Sabina lit the lamp.

"We got married," Single Shot said. "I guess the jedge told you."

Hat Rack nodded. As the full significance of it sank home, there was no room left for wrath.

"I was hunting down a cow thief," he began. "And someone spilled my plans." He cast an accusing glance at Sabina. Her expression suddenly changed, but she did not speak. "I got bushwhacked, and left for dead. A Mexican picked up what was left of me and took me acrost to Los Jacales. When I could ride, I went further into Mexico, looking for my man. I got framed and flung in jail, for months. I busted out, and headed back home."

"The jailer sold your guns and a fellow named Vasco wore one, right in Burning Wagon," Single Shot said.

Hat Rack sat up straight. "Who was he coming to see?"

"I kilt him afore he could answer."

"It's all my fault this happened," Sabina cried. "Morgan came out about those notes, the day after you left. I didn't say much but I must have given him a hint. And he had you dry gulched."

"Vasco," said Single Shot, rising, "must've come as a go-between, from some Mexican cattle thief wanting to deal with Morgan. Sabina's right. It must be Morgan, dealing in wet cattle on the side. But he won't fight, and we can't prove anything."

"We ain't getting nowhere," Hat Rack sombrely cut in. "I didn't go into Burning Wagon, jest went to the Lazy S. Sabina was gone. I went to your spread, and you was gone. And I trailed you. I overheard the boys mumbling when they didn't know I was listening. It's all over town, about you two."

"Listen!" Single Shot's voice crackled. "I treated her like your wife until I kilt Vasco. Then I lowed she was your widow, and I was proud to marry her, and who wouldn't've been. Am I right?"

"Shore you're right," Hat Rack admitted.

"If she'd been my widow, what'd you done?"

"I'd shore admired to marry her."

"Then what in tunket you got agin her now?" Single Shot challenged.

"A woman kain't run around with two husbands. It ain't right."

HIS voice was uncompromising. One of the two had to die. There was no talking him out of it, simply because he was not moved by any personal wrath. He believed the story. He understood. But the fact remained that one of Sabina's husbands had to drop out. Old friendship made the problem worse; nor could it alter the necessity, as Hat Rack saw it, of a quick move to put Sabina right with the world.

Single Shot read this from his friend's voice, from his eyes, from his posture. He would have to kill Hat Rack, or die at his partner's hand.

"Me and Single Shot," Hat Rack said, "is talking this over private like. Outside—" He gestured, and half turned toward the door.

Single Shot lunged. His fist caught the marshal completely unprepared. Hat Rack knew that until they had taken their distance, there would be no shooting. The unexpected blow froze him on his feet. He collapsed, glassy eyed.

They gave the wounded man tequila, but he wouldn't let them send for a doctor.

"Him and me ain't going to kill each other," Single Shot said to Sabina. "But you ain't having two husbands at onct for long, honey. I'm going to get the skunk that tried to kill him."

"To Los Jacales?" She knew that that was suicide.

"To Los Jacales, and don't you dast tell him."

He snatched the gold mounted gun and left before she could speak. And once on the street, he mounted Hat Rack's horse. He had no time to get his own. He had to ride, and quickly!

Single Shot found Los Jacales a duplicate of Las Tinajas, except that it was larger and dirtier, and contained more swaggering Mexican cut throats and American gun slicks per block.

And then, in the Cantina del Corazón de Oro, as they called the largest saloon in town, for the sake of the gilded heart that decorated its front, he found Pilar. She had finished dancing, and the crowd echoed her name. An Indian girl was picking up the coins that the spectators had flung to the floor. Single Shot tossed a gold piece into the scattering that dotted the hard packed earth.

Her black hair was high piled and gleaming, and tall combs rose as a crest from her proudly carried head. Her bare arms and shoulders had the warm whiteness of rich milk. The close fitted bodice could hardly have been cut any lower without becoming a girdle.

She stood there, kissing her hands to the applauding crowd. The musicians struck up again.

She smiled and shook her head. She bent her knees in a curtsey. The blue and gold of her striped skirt billowed out as she kept its hem from touching the dirt floor. Then she rose, and darted toward a table in the corner.

The crowd kept its distance. So did Single Shot, until he saw Pilar's companion. The tall Mexican's jacket and trousers were silver laced. He wore Colts in hand carved holsters, and a broad red sash bound his slim waist. For a moment, his resemblance to the gunner Single Shot had downed in Burning Wagon startled him; then he saw that the dancer's friend was older than Vasco. But they must be kinsmen.

Single Shot strode directly toward the two. There were whispered queries: "Is the Gringo fool asking Pilar for a dance?"

There were other girls, circulating from table to table. Pilar, Single Shot had already gathered, owned the *cantina*. She was to be admired, not approached. Don Gaspar was there to enforce this law.

SINGLE SHOT lifted his Stetson. "Don Gaspar — Doña Pilar—I have come on business that concerns one, maybe both of you," he said in Spanish. "It is this gun in my left holster." He raised his hands from his sides. "Be pleased to draw it, *señor*. Your kinsman asked me to bring it to you."

Pilar leaned forward, elbows planted on the table.

Don Gaspar drew the gold mounted Colt. His expression changed. He laid the weapon on the table, and gestured to a chair. "Be so kind as to join us, Don—"

"Mike," Single Shot said. "Miguel, in your language, *señor*. Don Vasco—he did not live long enough to tell me all his names—begged me to bring his brother this gun. He was a brave man and he died like one, so it was an honor to oblige."

Gaspar bowed, and said, "He was my cousin, but your mistake is natural. I cannot let you go with an empty holster. Take my gun. It is the mate to this one you bring. My cousin and I—but I would bore you with a long story, *señor!*"

Don Gaspar took the weapon from its holster. It was Hat Rack's other .45. All Single Shot now had to do was learn more about Don Gaspar, and his dead cousin. Before he went out ablazing, he might put a rope around Morgan's neck. But that required headwork, rather than guns. He rose and said, "*Buenas noches, señorita y señor.*"

"If you are not too tired, *señor*, be so kind as to keep Doña Pilar company. I must see my cousin's family. They have been anxious."

Pilar stared moodily over the edge of her fan. "Must you go, Gaspar?"

"It is my cousin," he said. "And this *caballero* is worthy to take my place for a while. Otherwise he would not have had the courage to humor a dead man's whim."

When he left, Pilar said, "You fooled him, but not me."

"What do you mean?" He twisted a Durham cigarette. "Fool, how?"

"You are one who does not care when he dies. A man sees you as a whimsical daredevil. A woman sees you for what you are."

Single Shot was not sure whether she was warning or threatening him.

"What do you mean?" he repeated.

"You are beyond caring whether you live or die. Let me give you an aim. This is my *cantina*, so you think. But in fact, it is part of this outlaw town's business. I am the bait. Gaspar is not my lover, and he protects me only because in the long run, I am worth more guarded than thrown to the crowd. Get me out of this cage. I will pay you what you ask. Provided you live and do not call for cash. . . ."

"Out of here?" He gestured about him. "This *cantina?*"

She smiled indulgently. "The whole town is my prison."

His glance dropped to follow her swift gesture. She hitched up the billowing striped skirt. Pilar's legs were as lovely as the rest of her, and she was generous, for that moment. She paused long enough, taking a key from her crimson garter, to give him glimpses of the smooth sleek swell that blossomed from her hose top. Then silk rustled, and the warm key was pressed into his hand.

She whispered the address, and added, "Tonight, *amigo*. Gaspar is afraid to force himself on me. I am too valuable to hurt."

When Gaspar returned, Single Shot left; the Mexican's thanks and Pilar's challenge whirled in his brain.

Hat Rack and Sabina did not need Single Shot's quest of death; Pilar did. Like him, she was seeking escape from the intolerable, and the cost did not count. . . .

(Continued on page 95)

GUN-HAWK

HIS leather chaps were worn, his blue shirt faded, his wide brimmed hat grey with dust. There was nothing you'd notice about him in particular except maybe his guns, the little diamond shaped scar near the corner of his right eye, and his eyes themselves. The guns were in open-flapped holsters that were tied low on his thighs and their butts had a dark sheen that only the palm of a hand can give them. The diamond shaped scar was hard to see unless you looked at him closely, but his eyes were unforgettable. They were greyish green and cold as ice. A gunhawk's eyes.

Sitting his tired bay, he looked up and then down Perdido's single street. He glanced at the swinging doors of the Jackpot saloon just opposite him, then his eyes lifted to the sign on the floor above that read "Jabez Gotch, Attorney at Law." A touch of his knee swung his cayuse in toward the hitching rail. Dismounting, he knotted his reins around the weathered horizontal timber and stood there for a moment, eyes still roving as he fished the makings out of his pocket.

The General Store was next to the saloon. There was a rickety buckboard in front of it, a flea-eaten grey between its shafts. Several men lounged on the store's porch. The ones sitting on the steps were typical cow-town loafers, but the two who stood near the store's screen door were of a different breed. One was big, rangy. The whole right side of his face was livid with a bright red blaze of a birthmark. The other jasper was short and stocky with a powerful spread of shoulders.

They both packed guns as if they'd feel naked without them and, engaged in a half joshing argument that had an undercurrent of tenseness in it, they had not even noticed the stranger hitch up. Putting the quirly he had rolled in his mouth and lighting it, he could hear what they were saying.

"And I'm betting five she does,"

FIRE

By REX NORMAN

"Turn around and get going," she said.

Three hundred dollars they offered him to see that young Taylor didn't turn up at the Two Bar B before noon! They knew that he was the man they wanted when they saw the way he treated the girl in front of the Jackpot saloon

said the man with the birthmark belligerently.

The chunky waddy snorted. "You're plumb loco, Blaze. She thinks you're lower'n a horned toad's belly. She wouldn't give you time if you was the last man on earth."

"The whole trouble with you, Hacker, is that you don't understand wimmen-folk. Get 'em when they're spooky and treat 'em rough, that's the way to make 'em eat out of your hand."

Hacker guffawed. "Eat out of your hand? She'll likely bite it off! If she talks to you, it'll be to cuss you to a slow gravy."

Blaze scowled at him. "Listen, put up or shut up! I'm bettin' she'll be talkin' sweet as honey to me before she leaves town."

"Better make up your mind, Hacker," whispered a horse-faced gent sitting on the steps. "Here she comes."

Hacker grinned slowly. "All right, Blaze. It's a bet."

Smoke jetted out of the stranger's nostrils. Slowly he walked forward, leaned against the end of the hitching rail. There was a rack of farm tools standing against the outside wall of the store. The hombre called Blaze picked out a rake, turned his back to the door and pretended to examine its handle.

The door opened and a girl came out, her arms piled high with bundles. She was young, slim. Her eyes were blue and her hair a pale gold, as fine as spun silk. Her plain gingham dress, faded with many washings, clung tightly to her lithe body, its hem just reaching her knees. Below that her tanned legs and small feet were bare.

IGNORING the men who goggled at her, she walked toward the steps. Blaze, his back still toward her, glanced over his shoulder. Then, when she was just behind him, he bore down on the handle of the rake. The teeth at its other end shot up, caught the bottom of the girl's skirt and held it. With a startled cry she stumbled, almost fell. She whirled around, still clutching the bundles to her heaving breast.

"Blast you to hell, Blaze Bowers!" she raged. "Unhook that rake!"

Blaze grinned wickedly as the watching men snickered.

"Why, sure, Hilda, sure." She was trying to jerk the skirt free without tearing it and without dropping her bundles but Blaze, his eyes fixed on her slim bare legs, managed to keep the metal teeth entangled in the cloth. "I'm turrible sorry, but I can't seem to . . ."

"Maybe I can help you," said the stranger. The quirly still between his lips, he stepped up on to the porch. One of his knees was under the center of the rake handle. With a swift movement, he brought his hands down. The toothed end of the rake dropped, releasing the girl's skirt. The other end snapped up over the fulcrum of his knee and caught Blaze a terrific smack in the face. With a howl he staggered back, clutching a bloody nose. Hacker and the other men stared bug-eyed at the stranger, then snarling a curse, Blaze threw himself forward into a crouch.

"Damn you!" he bellowed, his hands dropping to his guns. "I'll . . ."

His voice trailed off and he stood there open-mouthed as he looked down the barrel of the stranger's Colt. He was accounted hell a-wheeling with a gun, yet the stranger's speed had made him look like a rheumatic cripple.

"You'll what?" prodded the stranger. Again smoke jetted from his nostrils. "You're in a bad way, mister. Seems like you can't handle either a rake or a gun. Let's see can you handle your feet. Git!"

Blaze jumped a little under the lash of his voice. He hesitated a moment, but the stranger's eyes were steady and cold as his gun barrel. Glaring balefully, Blaze circled wide around him, went up the street and into the Jackpot Saloon.

The stranger holstered his gun, ignoring the scowling Hacker and the other men on the porch, and turned to the girl.

"I'll help you with them bun-

dles, miss," he said and took them from her. She was flushing belatedly now, her young breasts rising and falling tumultuously under her thin dress, but her eyes were warm.

"Thanks," she said quietly. "Just because we're nesters, these buzzards round here think they can pull anything they like. Dad usually comes into town with me, but he's kinda sickly. Been that way ever since old Ben Taylor died."

A faint spark appeared in the stranger's eyes.

"Who? Who'd you say?"

"Old Ben Taylor. He used to own the Two Bar B spread. He was a friend of dad's, let us live down in the hollow, but he got killed a while back and . . ."

"Oh," said the stranger. "Friends of Taylor's, eh?" He was standing next to the backboard, her packages in his arms. Without changing his expression, he let them drop into the dust of the road.

"Sorry," he went on flatly. "Seems like I dropped your bundles."

She stared at him for a moment as he stood there, making no move to pick them up. Then she went white with rage.

"You did that on purpose!"

"Smart girl. Anyone who's a friend of the Taylors is pure poison to me."

"Why, you . . ." She grabbed the buggy whip out of its socket, slashed at him with it. "I'll cut you to ribbons! I'll . . ."

He ducked under the whistling lash, caught her wrist and pulled her to him.

"Maybe that Blaze jasper was right after all. There's only one way to handle a hell-cat."

THOUGH she writhed and twisted, his iron grip held her, crushing her soft young bosom so tightly against his chest that she gasped for breath. Slowly he bent down and pressed his mouth to hers in a deliberate, searching kiss. As she stiffened, becoming rigid with surprise, he picked her up and tossed her into the buckboard. Scooping up her packages, he threw them after her.

"*Hasta la revista,*" he said calmly.

With a shrill cry of rage she cut at him again with the whip. This time he caught it, tore it from her hand and brought it down sharply on the flea-bitten grey's flank. With a jerk, the horse went galloping off down the street.

A roar of laughter went up from the loafers who had been watching from the porch. The stranger turned slowly.

"You wasn't laughing at me by any chance, was you?" he asked quietly. The men's eyes fell before his. No one answered.

"Or was you laughin' at her?" Still no answer.

The stranger nodded. "I see how it is. When a passel of hyenas gets together, they laughs withouten any reason."

Dropping the whip he had taken from the girl, he flicked some dust from his shirt front and without a backward glance, walked over to the Jackpot saloon and went in.

He stood inside the swinging doors for a moment, studying the place, then walked up to the bar.

Several waddies were standing there. They made room for him as he slapped down a coin, called for a drink. Nobody seemed to be looking at him, yet he could feel an electric tension in the air. He leaned casually against the bar. His eyes, seemingly sleepy, were fixed on the mirror behind it. He could see most of the saloon reflected in its depths. Behind him was a stairway. When he had come in, he thought he had caught a glimpse of a figure stealing up it. It had looked like Blaze Bowers.

In the far corner of the room, near the piano that was jangling out a tinny melody, was a table with a man and a girl sitting at it. The man was burly, heavy jowled, dressed in dark clothes. A wide brimmed hat was pushed back on his head. The girl was black haired, black eyed, with creamy white skin. She was wearing a red dress cut so low in front that it barely covered the full swell of her breasts. She was wicked looking, but as attractive as sin.

The bartender slid a glass over to the stranger, watched as he tossed it off.

"Just ride in?" he asked.

The stranger nodded.

"Staying around?"

The stranger shrugged.

"Mebbe. Mebbe not," he answered.

"What . . . ?" The bartender was not looking at him but at the glass he was polishing. "What might your handle be?"

"It might be most anything," said the stranger, "but it happens to be none of your damn' business. Still," he pushed his glass over to be refilled, "if you gotta give me a handle, you can call me Pecos. I hail from down Texas way."

"Sure, Pecos," said the bartender with false heartiness.

He was accounted hell a-wheeling with a gun, yet the stranger's draw had made him look like a rheumatic cripple.

"Drink up. This one is on the house."

"Thanks. And now maybe you can answer some questions for me. How far is it out to the Two Bar B?"

"The Two Bar B?" repeated the bartender, glancing at the table in the corner. "Why, about twelve miles. You got business out there?"

"Yeah," said Pecos quietly. "I got business out there." His hands

had strayed down to the butts of his guns, hitching them forward.

"Important business," said a throaty voice, "or can it wait a while?"

He looked to his left. The girl in the red dress. She was standing so close to him that he could feel the warmth of her body, see the ivory swell of the tops of her breasts as she leaned forward.

"It might wait," drawled Pecos quietly. "What've you got in mind?"

Slowly the girl's body swayed in toward him until he could just feel its supple pressure against him.

"It's not what I've got in my *mind* that matters," she murmured softly.

PECOS' temples were throbbing. It was as obvious as hell. Even if he hadn't seen her sitting with the big hombre, he would have known what she had been sent over for. To hogtie and throw him. Yet

if her actions were obvious, so were her charms. He slipped an arm around her, ran his hand deliberately up her back, his fingers sliding appreciatively over the firm contours of her body.

"Well, what are we going to do about it?" he asked.

A slightly startled look came into her eyes. She evidently hadn't expected quite this response. The slow, caressing movement of his hand, the look in his light eye, the lean hardness of him were doing things to her. She wet her lips.

"We might . . ." She jerked her head toward an inner doorway. Pecos grinned slowly, his eyes narrowed. When in doubt about the strength of an opponent's hand, the play is to force it.

"Now that," he said, "is a right sound idea. A little privacy wouldn't be bad at all." Stooping he picked her up. As she gasped, he started to carry her across the saloon. She had some reason for wanting to get him away from the bar. Well, he had no objection to going but he didn't feel like getting bushwhacked. If that were the play, if Blaze Bowers were somewhere waiting for him, he was going to be a lot safer with the girl in his arms. No one was going to heave lead at him when there was a chance of hitting her.

He paused a moment at the doorway.

"You sure got a way of making a hombre feel at home here," he called over his shoulder to the gaping bartender, then he went on.

There was no one on the stairs, no one in the corridor. Several doors opened off of it, the one at the end lettered, "Jabez Gotch, Attorney at Law." The girl's eyes, still wide, were fixed on Pecos' face. She pointed to the door next to the lawyer's office and he carried her toward it.

"What do they call you?" he asked.

"Kitty," answered the girl. "You're Pecos, aren't you?"

"Yeah. I'm Pecos." His voice was a little thick, his throat dry. Opening the door of the room he carried her inside, kicked it shut behind him.

Her lips were slightly parted, her breath coming quickly. Slowly he bent down and pressed his mouth to hers. She uttered a low, moaning sound and her arms went up around his neck. Her lips parted, became moist. Without taking his mouth from hers, he let her slide down until her toes touched the floor. Her body was trembling, her eyes half closed. Then, as her knees gave in complete compliance, Pecos pushed her from him, let her sink into a chair.

"All right," he gritted, "Talk!"

She bit her lips to control their quivering, looked wide-eyed at him.

"Talk?"

"Yeah. I ain't no woman-crazy short-horn and you ain't foolin' me for two bits. Who was that jasper you was sittin' with and why'd he want you to get me in here?"

"That . . . that was Link Kenny," she said uncertainly. "He owns this saloon. He wanted me to find out who you were, what you were doing in town here, and why you was interested in the Two Bar B."

"And why is *he* interested in the

Two Bar B?" As she hesitated, he took a step toward her. "Suppose I tell you I don't give a hoot about the Two Bar B, that I came clean up from Texas to find me a hombre named Larry Taylor?"

"Larry Taylor? What for?"

He didn't answer directly but glanced down. Her eyes followed his to the well worn butts of his Colts.

"You're gunning for him!" She continued to look at him speculatively for a moment, then making up her mind, nodded. "All right. Here's the whole story. The Two Bar B's the best spread around here. It belonged to an old coot named Ben Taylor. About six months ago he was found dead, a slug through him. In trying to find out who did it, Sheriff Hague turned up a will where old Taylor left the ranch to a nephew of his named Larry Taylor."

"I got that much down in Texas. Where does Kenny come in?"

"Old Taylor hadn't seen his nephew in years. He wasn't even sure he was alive, so he put a six months clause in his will. That six months is up tomorrow at noon. If Larry Taylor doesn't turn up by then to claim the ranch, it goes to the first mortgagee . . . and that's Link Kenny."

"NOW it figgers," said Pecos slowly. "Kenny wants the ranch. He likely don't know what Larry Taylor looks like, so he has to get the savvy on any stranger that drifts into town since it might be him."

"You're smart," admitted Kitty.

"Sure I'm smart. I been after Larry Taylor for two years now. There's a little matter of a girl down in Texas that . . . " He checked himself. "Anyhow, I seen notices around saying he should come up here to Perdido to claim an estate. I figgered that was my chance to get on his trail, so I come up here myself." His voice became harsh. "I aim to plant that hombre. Kenny would just as soon he didn't show up before noon tomorrow to claim the ranch. Maybe Kenny and I should have a little talk."

"Maybe you should," said Kitty.

All the time that they were talking, Pecos had been using his eyes and ears as well as his brain. He had seen Kitty glance past his shoulder toward the door, heard a board creak faintly in the corridor outside. Someone was there, listening. The same rule held good now as before. When in doubt, play a forcing game. His hand went out, pulled her to him.

"In the meantime, how about you and me getting friendly?" he asked.

She hung back a little, glancing at the door again.

"Gee, honey, I don't know if . . . "

His strong arms were around her, pressing her closer and closer to him. The look in his eyes, the slow, stroking movements of his hands were too much for her. With a moan she surged forward, her body swaying in close against him.

"He'll kill me," she whispered. "But . . . "

Pecos' lips welded themselves to hers. His arms tightened about

her lithe form, when the door behind him opened.

"Hope I ain't intruding," said a harsh voice. Pecos released Kitty and they both turned. Link Kenny stood in the doorway, looking at them sourly. His wide-brimmed black hat was still on his head. A bald, shriveled-up jasper in dark clothes stood beside him.

"So you were listening outside the door, eh?" remarked Pecos. "I kinda figgered that."

"You're smart, like Kitty said before." Kenny jerked his head at the man who stood next to him. "This is Jabez Gotch. How about comin' into his office with us?"

"Sure." Pecos threw an arm casually around Kitty's shoulders. "Come on, *Chiquita.*"

Scowling angrily, Kenny pulled her away from him, pushed her out into the hall.

"Listen, she done what she was supposed to do and it don't go no further. From now on, lay off!"

Pecos smiled crookedly, winked at Kitty. "If you pick range like you pick women, the Two Bar B must be a winner."

He followed Kenny into Gotch's office. Hacker and Blaze Bowers were sitting on the desk and they glowered at him. Pecos grinned coolly back.

"So they're your boys, eh? Which one of them killed old Ben Taylor?"

"Neither of them!" shouted Kenny. "They never left town here the day he was shot. Stranger, you talk too damn' much!"

"Now, now, gentlemen," said Gotch smoothly. "Let's keep our tempers. I know there's been one unfortunate incident already." He glanced at Bowers' swollen nose, "but that was before we realized we all had the same interests." His eyes were beady as he looked at Pecos. "I understand you know Larry Taylor by sight. None of us do. The last time he was around here was when he was nine years old. Could you describe him to us?"

"Sure," said Pecos. "He's about my height but a little heavier. Dark, kinda shifty eyes. Dresses real fancy and carries a pearl handled gun. But there's one sure way of telling him. He's got an American flag tattooed on his chest."

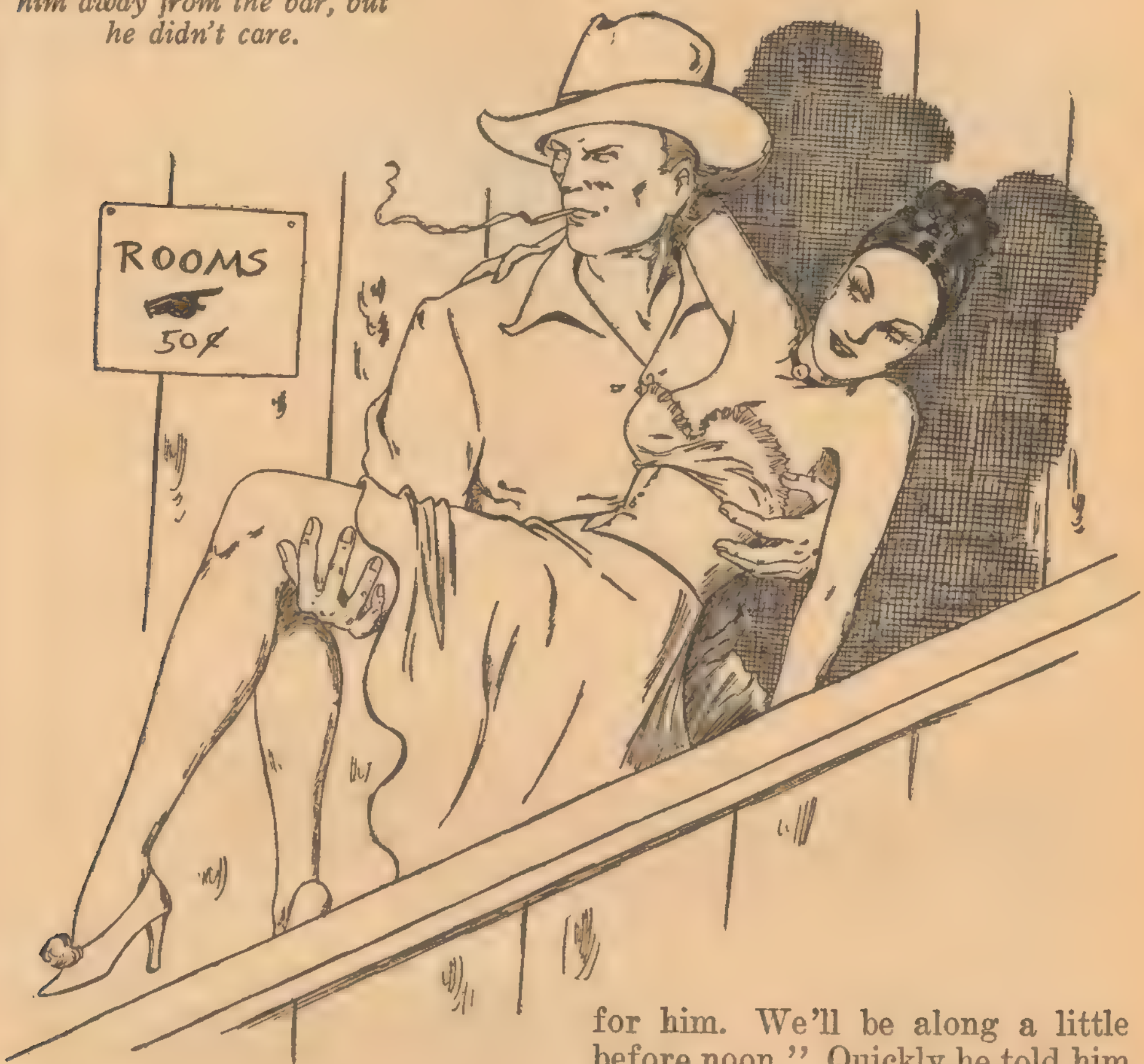
"Ah," purred Gotch. "Very satisfactory. Of course, we only want to know so we can help him claim the estate if . . . "

"GOTCH, you're too consarned cautious," growled Kenny. "I'm putting my cards on the table." He turned to Pecos. "I wasn't too sure about you till Hacker here told me how you turned on Hilda Ericson when you found out her pa was a friend of old Taylor's. That cinched it. Now get this, Larry Taylor mustn't turn up at the Two Bar B before noon tomorrow! I understand you're gunning for him. Well," he took a roll of bills out of his pocket, threw them on the desk. "There's a hundred and fifty dollars. Take 'em. If he doesn't claim the ranch, there'll be another hundred and fifty for you. Savvy?"

"Three hundred bucks! You're loco!" howled Blaze Bowers. "Why me and Hacker . . . "

"Shut up!" snapped Kenny. "I know what I'm doing. You and

He knew she wanted to get him away from the bar, but he didn't care.



Hacker were here in the saloon when old Ben Taylor was plugged. I want to keep just as much in the clear if Larry Taylor gets planted. You two are the first ones the sheriff'd come after. That's why someone that ain't known is gonna do the job." He looked at Pecos. "Well?"

Pecos scooped up the money, tucked it inside his shirt.

"How do you get out to the Two Bar B?" he asked.

Kenny slapped him on the back. "That's the ticket. Wait out there for him. We'll be along a little before noon." Quickly he told him how to reach the ranch. Pecos nodded, grinned at Blaze and Hacker, then turned to go. Kitty was standing next to the door, watching him. He couldn't help himself. There was a devil prompting him and Kenny riled so easily.

"How about saying goodbye, Chica?" he asked. Before she could answer, he pulled her to him, pressed his mouth to hers. Kenny bellowed with rage but Pecos ignored him. He kissed her expertly, thoroughly, till she was trembling like a leaf. When Kenny started for him with murder in his eyes,

he broke away from the girl, skipped out the door.

"*Hasta la manana,*" he called, and waving a mock farewell to Kenny, went down the stairs.

It was dark when Pecos reached the Two Bar B. No lights showed in any of the buildings. All the cowpokes had left after old Ben Taylor's death. He rode on to the creek, a short way above the ranch, hobbled his horse, built a fire, and cooked his chow. He smoked one quirly, staring into the embers; he then rolled into his blanket.

Somehow he couldn't fall asleep immediately. Even when he closed his eyes a face seemed to be floating before them, the face of the blonde girl he'd had the run-in with in town, Hilda Ericson. Her expression kept changing. First it was grateful, then it was raging, burning with hate and indignation. A wry smile twisted Pecos' lips. She and her father lived out here. Perhaps, tomorrow . . . Her face faded finally and he slept.

When he woke, it was instantly, cleanly, with every faculty alert. Yet such was his control that not the tremor of a muscle showed he was no longer asleep. He opened his eyes slowly, just enough to peer out from under the lowered lids, and then he knew he had been wise. Bending over him, only half visible in the early morning mist, was a spectral figure.

HE THOUGHT fast. His guns were under the rolled up slicker he was using as a pillow. His left arm was underneath him, inside the blanket roll, his right hand was next to his face. The figure bent lower . . . and Pecos' free hand shot up and grabbed its throat. A sudden jerk and he had pulled the figure crashing down to the ground. He dove for his guns, then froze. There, lying half stunned beside him was the girl of whom he had been thinking as he fell asleep the night before, Hilda Ericson!

He released her and she sat up, shaking her head to clear it.

"Blast you! What's the idea?" she raged, glaring at him.

Pecos chuckled quietly as he rose to his feet, buckled on his guns.

"Looks like we're starting in just where we left off yesterday. You hadn't oughta come sneakin' up on a man like that. Makes him spooky."

"Spooky? It's a wonder you can get a wink of sleep with a conscience like yours!"

She ignored his proffered hand, rose to her feet also. She was dressed as she had been when he had first seen her, in a plain, faded gingham dress. It had shrunk until it was too small for her and with her blonde hair hanging down over her shoulders, with her bare feet, she looked like a lovely, oddly mature child. A bucket lay on the ground nearby. She had evidently been on her way to the spring to get water when she had seen him. She stirred restlessly under his scrutiny.

"Well, haven't you stared at me enough?"

Pecos shook his head slowly. "That'd be kinda hard to do, Hilda. It could keep a man busy his whole life."

It was true. There was something so pulse-stirring about her

lithe loveliness that he was unable to tear his eyes away. She flushed, her face softening a little.

"I oughtn't to be talking to you," she murmured. "Not after what happened in town yesterday. Besides, what are you doing out here?"

"I got some business to take care of. And . . . well, I sorta hoped I'd get a chance to see you again."

Her eyes were downcast. "Why?" she asked.

"Why?" he repeated. "To explain things to you. To . . . oh, hell!" His hands went out and around her. "Does this tell you anything?" And pulling her close to him, he crushed his mouth to hers.

Her body was taut, unyielding, her lips cold. Then slowly, trembling, she relaxed. She swayed a little closer to him. Through the thin fabric of her dress he could feel the warm, rounded softness of her young figure. His heart started pounding more quickly. Then with a sudden movement, she had broken away from him and one of his sixguns was gripped in her hand.

"Yes!" she said. "It tells me that you're a sneaking side-winder who I oughta drop in his tracks!"

"But, Hilda . . . " He checked himself, his lips tightening, the warm glow that had filled him turning chill. So her seeming response had just been a ruse to get his gun. He shrugged. "Now what?"

"Turn around and get going. I'm taking you to our shack."

A crooked grin on his lips, Pecos followed her orders. He had meant it when he kissed her. She did something to him that no woman before had ever done, and this is what he got for it.

THEY reached a rough cabin set back a little from the creek. Prodded by Hilda's gun, he pushed open the door and went inside. An elderly man lay in a bunk on the far side of the cabin's single room. He looked at Pecos, at Hilda, then back to Pecos. His eyes narrowed a little.

"Who-all's this, Hilda?" he asked. "And why're you holding an iron on him?"

"This is the hombre I met in town yesterday, the one I told you about."

"Oh!" Ericson looked hard at Pecos. "And why'd you bring him here?"

Somehow Pecos was surprised at the lack of rancor in the old man's voice. Was he a little touched in the head? He watched him warily.

"Because I got a hunch he's here for no good!" said Hilda. "He turned on me when he heard we'd been friendly with old Ben Taylor. This is the last day Larry Taylor can claim the ranch. Suppose this coyote is waiting to drygulch him! Suppose . . . "

"Suppose you gimme that gun and rustle up some grub. Even if he's the varmint you think he is, we can't let him starve."

Uncertainly Hilda gave her father the gun, glared at Pecos, and started fussing with the stove in the corner.

"Set down, stranger," said Ericson. He gestured to a rickety chair with the gun. "I don't like what I heard about you, so maybe

(Continued on page 102)

DEATH IS ON

He was a fighting, drinking, gambling fool; but he'd fallen for the lure of soft lips and a woman's arms . . . to his sorrow! The only wonder was that he had come out of the trap alive. No more women for him, swore Whirl Arrow! But he hadn't met Maia King

THE GIRL had doped Whirl Arrow's liquor after he'd given the tinhorn gambler an hour to quit Bordertown. Whirl Arrow, a man known along the Border as a fighting, drinking, gambling, lovemaking fool, had fallen for the lure of soft eyes and warm flesh, and a woman's willing figure seductive in his arms.

He'd awakened in the brush, miles out of Bordertown, sun torturing his eyes. His horse stood ground-tied nearby and he had his gun. Whirl groaned, was sick, and it took a lot of trembling and sweating before he crawled into his saddle.

The girl was the tinhorn's sweetie! That was it.

"If they figger," Whirl muttered darkly, "this stunt will keep me away from Bordertown, they don't know me a-tall . . . Or do they, now? They could've kilt me, or left me out here without a mount."

He shook his head and winced. And as happens to many men, the feeling flooded Whirl: he was sick and tired and through with this wild life and all it meant. And women? Bigod, never again for him!

His thoughts turned to the home he'd left so long ago, and nostalgia was heavy, gnawing his insides. Home! And like a winging bird, Whirl Arrow headed North. Rains and heat, cold, plains and mountains ran out behind him. His nerves and body were ragged and fatigued the day he reached the White Mound Hills and his mount's feet trod old, familiar Bent Arrow range.

"I wonder if the Ol' Man'll forgive me after all this time?" Whirl speculated, thinking of the heated quarrel that had sent him kiting away from these parts.

HE RODE a little rise and skylined there, leaning suddenly in the saddle to stare down the slope beyond. Gaunt cattle grazed the flats below him, and the mounted figure that had taken Whirl's attention, was dismounting close to a small band of them.

Whirl swore softly. She wasn't even dressed for riding, and showed more ignorance by getting afoot like that. She hooked a stirrup over her saddlehorn, then, and it was then Whirl's hooks hit his horse and he was hightailing down the slope.

A proddy range cow, head down and sharp horns ready, was going for the girl.

THE HOUSE

By
MEL DAVIS

White faced and sobering, he looked down at Whirl Arrow, who had fallen and didn't move.

Whirl yelled as the girl sensed her danger and whirled. She screamed sharply and jumped. A horn raked her left leg from knee to thigh, ripping the worn, faded gingham dress she wore. She rolled in the short, brown grass as the cow wheeled to come at her again.

The .45 in the worn holster on

Whirl's right hip glinted dull sunlight and blue-white smoke blossomed on the barrel. The cow broke her lumbering stride, faltered, then dropped as the six-gun roared again.

The girl was struggling to sit up when Whirl reached her. Her small, heart-shaped face was drawn with shock and pain. It was an appealing face; as appealing as the small breast that heaved under the faded dress.

"Lie still!" Whirl grunted. "Let's look at this."

She blinked large eyes and obeyed him silently. Whirl pulled at the torn skirt. "Just a bruise," he mumbled, a choke in his voice. The girl's leg was slender, white; a sculptured symmetry. "Barely grazed you, from your knee to—"

"Oh!" she cried. Her fingers—Whirl noted how workworn those little fingers were—held the rent together. "You shouldn't," she said in a whisper, not meeting his eyes.

"An' damn' fool girls shouldn't ride out in gingham dresses an' get down afoot near proddy range stock!" he growled. His anger rose abruptly; anger at her because she had made him feel pity and tenderness and desire.

The girl had temper of her own. "I've no riding clothes," she snapped. "I had to tighten my cinch. And," spitefully, "I don't think it was necessary to kill our cow."

"Damn' poor specimen," Whirl grunted, rising and turning to look at the dead animal. "You never see a Bent Arrow beef? Hell! That critter is branded Bent Arrow, an' you called it yours!"

"It is. And you can stop that swearing!" She limped as she got up. "I'm Maia King. If a man named Whirl Arrow doesn't get back here within another month or so, the Bent Arrow comes to my father and my brother Kip and me."

"An' you don't want that," Whirl jeered. "Ain't that just too bad." He removed his dusty sombrero and made a mocking bow. "I'm Whirl Arrow, an' I'm back. I—Say, where's my ol' man?"

"Anse Arrow's been dead more than a year," the girl said with soft composure. "And I don't think it's too bad you're back. Oh, Whirl, I'm glad you are!"

HE SCOWLED. A caustic remark came to his tongue, but he held it in check. Best find out whatever he could before he riled her any more. He merely said, "I'll catch up your horse." Maia King's breath was swifter, her eyes a little dewy as she watched him perform his chore.

As they rode, the girl talked. She said: "We came here from Nebraska. Two years after you'd left home. We went broke when my brother lost our stake in a pok—Well, lost it."

"In a poker game," Whirl sneered. "Go on."

"We went to work for your father, then. Conditions got bad, your father was getting old. He died of pneumonia. He willed us the Bent Arrow if you didn't return within a year. If you did, it was up to you to try and build the ranch back up, and I retain half."

"You an' your paw and stake-losin' brother took advantage of

an ol' man, an' you expect me to work like hell to see you on the gravy train again," Whirl snarled. "Well, no woman can run that in on me. No, bigod!" He pounded the saddlehorn with his fist.

"Stop swearing," she admonished. "And lie down and see the Bent Arrow go on to wrack and ruin. That's your style, I imagine. A man who shouts and swears at women—"

"I never swore at you."

"You did!"

"Damnit, I *never*. An' if you think I'm goin' off an' let you have Bent Arrow, you're crazy as a bedbug in a railroad boardin' house!"

The girl turned her head. Although she was very near tears, a smile she didn't want Whirl to see was imprinted on her lips.

Whirl was fuming when, at dusk, they reached the ranchyard. He reined up and Maia was wisely silent while he had his memories and his regrets. Then he turned on her, angrily.

"Who in hell let the sheds an' barns an' house an' corral—ah, the whole huddem place run down like this?" he snarled.

"My father is a cripple," she said in a tight voice. "My brother is, well young and a little irresponsible. I'd hoped you'd come back and perhaps straighten him out."

Whirl grinned at the idea of the helling Whirl Arrow acting as dry nurse to some damn' poker-losing bum. So he let that pass, put the horses in a sagging stable and went to the house.

THEY stepped from a side porch into the kitchen's chill, darkening gloom. A figure was dim in a chair beside the cooling stove, and it complained: "Maia? Whyn't you hurry back? The fire's gone out, an' we need light. And Kip ain't back from Roamer. Oh, that you, Kip? You fool, ain't you ever going to stop squirting around in town?"

"Pap!" Maia ordered. "Be still. This isn't—" she touched a match to a lamp wick and dull yellow filled the room—"Kip. It's Whirl Arrow come back home."

Whirl and the old man in the kitchen chair studied each other. Whirl glared at the whiskered, rheumy-eyed old son, who had, instead of a good right leg, a pegleg that had been nailed together many times, and wound with bailing wire.

"You come home, eh?" Pap cackled. "To eat, I bet, and your doggone plate is busted. Scally wagging all over, while us folks hardly got enough vittles for ourselves."

"Shut up," snarled Whirl. "An' get up, before I kick your errant form to hellangone. A pegleg ain't stoppin' you from doin' chores an' gettin' in some wood. You sit an' wait for this girl to wait on you hand an' foot, an' do the range work a young skunk ought to do."

He snapped his mouth shut, all-fired madded up because he'd taken up for a woman. "Get up!" he roared.

Pap got up and scuttled, nimbly enough, toward the door. It opened before he got there. A youth with a thin, dissipated face and weak mouth, dressed in cheap, flashy mail-order cowhand duds, came in. His breath reeked bum redeye

when he opened his mouth to ask, "Ain't supper ready yet?"

"No!" Whirl rapped. "An' won't be none until you've done some work. Clean a stable, or something But work."

Kip King turned bloodshot eyes toward Whirl. He dropped one hand awkwardly to the handle of a cheap nickel-plated pistol and tried to lower his voice to an unnatural gruffness.

"Who're you, to be talking to me, a friend of Cass Broone, like that?" he demanded threateningly.

A catlike stride; an open palm smacking flesh, a cheap pistol flung into a corner and Kip King into a chair.

"Whirl Arrow's the brand, you no account fuzzface," Whirl yapped. "An' if you ever pull that pistol on me, I'll shove it down your throat. You an' the ol' man get out an' earn your supper. You hear me yell?"

"Wait'll I tell my friend, Cass Broone," Kip whined as he went out. Pap thumped out behind him. Whirl turned toward the girl.

"You might mean right," she told him scathingly. "But hitting a weak boy and threatening a crippled old man is hardly a thing a man would do."

"Who cares if you think I'm a man?" he rasped, temper out of hand. "Who cares what you think about anything?"

She bent her head as she turned toward the stove. She answered Whirl Arrow only with her lonely heart: Some day I hope you will.

SUPPER was a meal eaten in sullen silence. Breakfast next morning was the same. Whirl tried to keep his eyes away from Maia, whose worn house dress had shrunken from too many washings, and held tight to the inspiring little body that was hers. And because he couldn't keep his glances away from her, he grew angry again.

"I noticed the harness for the team was dried an' rottin', when I looked around before breakfast this mornin'," he snapped. "You whiskered ol' goat, you'll oil an' mend it today," he told Pap. He turned to the sullen, defiant Kip.

"There's corrals to be mended. You'll start on that."

"Won't. I got to go to town."

"You'll fix corral!" Whirl thundered. "Or get hell beat out of you."

"Stop swearing and threatening," Maia snapped.

"Stop blattin' your female brains out," Whirl gave back. "They're goin' to work. Kip, get up from there. Move, damn you!"

Whirl's palm caught Kip's sullen face for the second time, rolled him out of his chair, and sprawled him on the floor.

"I'll fix corral," Kip panted, getting up. "And I'll fix you, too."

"Try it. Those corrals get fixin' first. Come on, you two. You're startin' to earn your beans."

He dug tools out of the wreckage of the harness and blacksmith shop and put Kip to work. Then sat Pap down with cracked harness and a can of saddle soap.

"You ain't going to work," Pap complained.

"I'm makin' a ride over what's left of the range," Whirl answered. He stopped and came

walking back. "An' if you think you're goin' to stop, minute I ride out—"

He moved in quickly. There was a flurry of arms and legs, a squawk, a shrill curse. Whirl stepped back, holding Pap's peg-leg in one hand. "Bigod, I guess that'll keep you there until I come-back," Whirl hooted. "I'll take this lumber leg along with me."

"Maia!" Pap shrieked. But Maia didn't answer. She was watching from a window, a broad smile on her face. Nor did she come to Pap's assistance when he tried to hop to the house and found the task too much for him. So Whirl found Pap back at his task when he returned. Maia was approaching when Pap held up a tug.

"Slick's new," he cackled. "Swell job. That's what we need around here: somebody to do swell jobs. Me, now, I aim to have this place shining and humming before very long."

Whirl nodded. Pap was childish with the vagaries of mood of the very old. Shame because he'd been so rough with Pap was a thing that bit Whirl's heart.

"Sure, Pap," he said softly. "An' maybe we can rustle the money to get you a good, new leg."

He turned. Maia had heard, and her heart was singing. She knew, now, there was kindness personified under Whirl's veneer of ornery stubbornness and violent ways.

"Maybe you can tell me why what few range cows we got ain't got half enough calves?" Whirl snapped at her. "Or why the stock ain't been shifted to new range. Never mind the last. You couldn't do it. Where's Kip? I aim to get some answers out of him."

"Kip—slipped away. I saw him too late to try to stop him," Maia muttered.

"You could go in after him," Whirl accused.

"No. You—well, you see, Whirl, I couldn't, because I'm afraid of Cass Broone. The way he looks at me!" she shuddered.

"Like that," Whirl said darkly. "Well, I'll go get him. An' he'll wish—"

"Whirl, no!" she begged. "Wait. Let's take the wagon. I need things from town. We'll both go in."

She raised one toilworn little hand. Whirl thought of the few dollars in his pockets. Yes, she needed things. And he'd get them—oh, not for any reason other than the lady of Bent Arrow should have a few decent duds to wear, by damn!

"All right," he agreed, taking up the newly oiled harness and heading for the barn.

HE HOOKED a shaggy team to the rickety stock wagon and was tightening the endgate when his eyes suddenly narrowed. He climbed up and knelt, examining dark spots on the boards. He said nothing until he'd helped Maia onto the seat and was wheeling up the trail.

"Who used this wagon last?" he demanded abruptly.

"Why, Kip," she answered. "Why?"

"I'll answer why," he rumbled. "I got the answer to why the poor calf crop is poorer, an' the yearlin's ain't as many as they ought

to be. Somebody has used this wagon to haul butchered beef in. You got any ideas?"

Her deep eyes swam with sudden tears. She sobbed, and her head was on his shoulder while she clutched convulsively at his shirt-front.

"Whirl, oh, Whirl," she sobbed against his chest. "I had guessed where Kip was getting the money he throws away at Cass Broone's, and on one of the girls, Essie Doan, who works there.

"But I'm tired, so tired, and I'd lost all hope until you came."

Her warmth and nearness, her tears and smallness seemed to pull the heart and soul out of Whirl. He wanted to hug her until she was crushed into being a living part of himself.

Still, his outward stubbornness prompted, he'd been fooled before by women who shed easy tears.

"Kip'll be tired of somethin', too, before it's done," he growled, sliding along the seat away from her.

She straightened, wiping her eyes with a handkerchief fashioned from a bit of flour sacking. "I'm sorry I cried. But," with a sudden rise of spirit, "you're not going to hurt Kip. He's my brother, and he's young. He's taken the wrong pattern, is all. If he had a real man to use as a pattern—a man who'd try to understand—perhaps he'd be different."

"Nobody made a pattern for me," he grunted.

"No. And look at the sour twist you've taken against humankind. You—oh, Whirl, let's stop this quarreling. When you've got Bent Arrow back on its feet, I'll sell to you. For just enough to get us off your hands. I don't want Bent Arrow, anyhow."

"What do you want, then?" He forced his voice to be calm.

She looked at him, then looked away, fumbling in a small, worn purse, hiding her confusion as best she might. "Here," she said, handing something toward him. He took it without thinking, and the contact of their hands sent tingling, dangerous sensations through both of them.

He scowled, then, at the large gold locket she had given him. "What the h—what's this?" he demanded.

"We've got to have groceries," she murmured sadly. "That locket is all I have left of my mother's things. I think there is a man in Roamer who will buy such things."

"You—you'd part with this, to feed your father and brother?" There was deep reverence in his tone.

"And you," she said simply, small head bowed and poor, rough little hands folded in her lap.

"Ahhh," Whirl Arrow almost groaned. He slipped the locket into the shirtpocket over his heart, reined the team with the other hand, and looked at her.

Range silence and the rolling hills were around them, and there was silence on their lips; their lips together. Their bodies quivered with the strain of emotion that was deep and abiding and so real it fairly made them ache.

Her fingers quivered as they curved the back of his neck and she sobbed because she knew there were no words to express her want of him. The straining, arched little

breasts of her flattened against his heaving chest.

IT was Whirl Arrow who stopped this thing—before it ran beyond the bounds of endurance and restraint. Spent, quivering, the girl whispered shakily, "Whirl, oh, Whirl, is it a shame to love as we have shown we do?"

"There's no sin in Heaven," he whispered back, shaking visibly as he picked up the reins and rolled the wagon on again.

The road ran its way almost into Roamer before he spoke. "This Cass Broone, now: what has he done to you?"

"Nothing. Except try to paw me, once. He offered to see that Kip stopped coming to his place, if I—I would—"

"I know." His voice sharpened impatiently. "An' he's still tryin', through Kip. Well!" There was grim finality in the word.

He walked the team up Roamer's sad Main Street, noting the place had changed but little since he'd seen it last. Only the old Palace of Pleasure had changed. A sign proclaimed the old structure now to be "Cass's Bar."

He hitched before the porch at the General Store and helped Maia alight. She cried, gaily but seriously, "I seem to be flying, not walking, Whirl."

"You fly into the store, then, honey," he told her. "Get what you need. I'll—I'll see what I can do about the locket," he added with a lie.

He turned and put his course toward Cass's Bar, entered, had one small, quick drink and went on toward the rear where four men carried on a poker game.

Kip King, tighter than any gambler ever should be, weaved in his chair and looked up at Whirl. Fear flicked Kip's bloodshot eyes, and then he straightened defiantly and looked at Cass Broone, the heavy-set, thicklipped dark man across the table. These two took Whirl's attention, he dismissing the two punchers filling out the game.

Whirl nodded at an empty chair. "Is this a closed game?" he inquired, his look at Broone a dare.

"Not's far I'm concerned—bein' jest gone bust," one puncher answered, pushing back his chair.

"Nothing is c l o s e d here," Broone said too softly. "Not even the shooting season."

"Be sure you got a huntin' license sayin' you're damn' good," Whirl answered smoothly, sitting down.

The remaining puncher dealt. Whirl said, as he pushed some of his scant supply of dollars into the pot and discarded two: "You losin' as usual, Kip? Well, be careful. There'll be no more beef butchered an' hauled in from the ranch. . . . By the way, who owns the Roamer butcher shop?"

"Why, Cass owns it—what the hell you getting at, Whirl?" Kip caught himself up and began shouting angrily.

"Gettin' at it that you'll be out of money after this . . . An' I'll raise you five. . . ."

Kip glanced nervously at Broone as Whirl raked in the pot. Broone's mouth drew down, his look darkened.

Whirl dealt, and said, "Gettin'

(Continued on page 108)

CASSIDY IS SUDDEN

By LAURENCE DONOVAN

THAT swirl of blue smoke should not have been there. It spelled danger, and it was one thing that could put the chill of fear into "Sudden" Cassidy. He saw the smoke before he heard the faint, wind-wafted scream of a girl.

Sudden jabbed his red bay with stub spurs. Something sent his long, strong fingers lifting the cedar-butted .45's and making sure they were loose in their holsters. It wasn't smoke, with its fire threat to the summer dried pines and the thick grass of the grazing lands that caused his precaution. Nor was it the woman's scream.

Sudden had been blind-trailing Black Bart Rogan. Blind-trailing because he knew too well Black Bart's objective. There was but one clearing on this lower bench of Saddle mountain, and John Derring had his cabin in it. In a few years Derring had cleared crop soil, and he was grazing a herd.

It was John Derring's woman who made Sudden sure of the blind trail of Black Bart. Hadn't he come upon them twice, out in the pines? She was a redheaded, shapely and tempting woman critter for these parts. Her brand wasn't often found in Idaho's Snake Gulch country.

John Derring was old, and tired always with what was perhaps his last stand against the wild country. His woman was young and vibrated with hell. Black Bart was big and strong, and he had the best looking pan of any long rider that ever rustled prime beef or spilled blood in the looting of a gold cache.

So those two times Sudden Cassidy had ridden silently upon them over a cushion of matted pine needles, it was to see Derring's red-headed woman in Black Bart's arms, and the delightful perfection of her body had caused Sudden's breath to catch, as much as he hated the woman and Black Bart for what they were.

When the smoke showed, spiraling through the green of the tall pines, and the faint, terrified scream came, Sudden knew Black Bart was already down in the clearing. Whatever ruckus caused the scream of the girl probably was more sinister than the springing up of an accidental fire.

Seeing the beauty of Rita Derring, as she wept over her father's body, Sudden Cassidy could understand why the sheriff had made such frequent visits. But that didn't help him solve the murder!

"Hain't no woman-critter ever had the say-so over Black Bart," he said. 'Where's thet map?"

Faint as it was, Sudden became convinced it had not come from the loose and redheaded Mrs. Derring. There was a much younger girl about the lonely cabin. Derring's daughter by a former wife. Sudden had never met up with her, but he had learned her name was Rita, and that Sheriff Ponder often rode out to the Derring cabin from the town of Snake Gulch with ideas in his mind.

As the red bay plunged between the pines, setting a dead run toward the smoke, Sudden took a dally in his hate for the Derring heifer and Black Bart. For no matter what might have happened, the badge he wore inside his boot gave him the feel of his continued duty.

Black Bart was the active chief

of the most ruthless band of owlhooters ever long riding the Snake Gulch range and beating the law by knowledge of the *malpais* where the pines and grass gave way to salty barrens and barrancas. But there was a bigger brain behind Black Bart, and there was some hombre in Snake Gulch who rodded the owlhoot riders and managed to keep the bars up between Black Bart's killers and the law.

So Sudden himself was long riding. He had greased speed with his guns, and he had become Black Bart's chief *segunda*. Only Black Bart knew the Snake Gulch boss, and only by keeping a close loop on Black Bart could Sudden Cassidy make that badge in his boot strike at the real ramrod in town.

THE branch of a low cedar slapped across Sudden's tight-skinned face and stung. Even teeth showed as he swore. His blue eyes smoked as he swiped away the rusty brown hair dropping over them. The fire down in the clearing suddenly changed its smoke from blue to blackish gray. Sudden knew then the Derring cabin was burning, even before his red bay carried him into view of it.

When he saw the wind-pulled flame, and saw how the blaze was breaking through the windows with black smoke at the core, it told him there was spread lamp oil behind it. Which could mean, in the middle of the afternoon, only that the fire had been set.

Sudden slid from the saddle, ground reined the red bay, and high-heeled into the last clump of pines before reaching the open space of the cropped clearing. Again came the scream of a girl, rising in high, clear terror and despair.

Because of that, Sudden did not pause when he had a glimpse of Black Bart and John Derring's woman. They were making out through the pines toward a pair of tied cayuses. Sudden was running toward the cabin, but his eyes were cocked backward and they were quick.

The redheaded woman gripped something in her right hand. Black Bart caught her arm. He said something and the woman thrust the object she was carrying into thick rhododendron bushes. Black Bart caught her in his arms then, and the thing that happened made Sudden sick with rage.

They hadn't turned and they hadn't seen him lunging across the clearing.

"Bidam!" gritted Sudden. "I'm layin' all I got there's more than an accident to this fire!"

He was close to the burning cabin now. A glance relieved him of one worry. Barring the wind whipping a hot brand into the dried needles of the pines or over into the summer parched grass, the wide range would escape. The cleared land was bare all around the cabin.

"Oh, God in heaven!" screamed the girl's voice. "What happened? Get up! I can't lift you!"

Smoke was filtering from the low doorway of hewn logs, but the way was clear under it. Sudden's high-heeled boots carried him through in headlong haste. It brought him into the big main room with its puncheon floor.

This was the first time he had

been close to Rita Derring. What he saw stopped him, caused him to shift his eyes away, and pulled them back again: The girl was bending over the body of gray-haired John Derring. She must have been changing dresses when the oil fire exploded, for her little cotton underthings didn't amount to a damn when it came to concealing the most breath-taking sight that had ever come to Sudden Cassidy.

She was on one knee, and the contour of the other leg from ankle to knee and along the almost completely exposed thigh couldn't have been improved by the best sculptor. So it was with her slim, white-skinned waist, and the rest of her body that was bare to the strip of linen brassiere over firm, young breasts.

Glossy black hair tumbled around her creamy shoulders, and her tanned, oval face, although it was strained and desperate, had the red-lipped sweetness that a man would keep a long time in his mind. Sudden was quick, and he was on a knee beside her.

His arm went around her shoulders, lifting her.

"Get outside pronto!" he said hoarsely, wondering why his voice went off key at the touch of her soft flesh. "I'll fetch out yore dad! Hurry!"

Her dark eyes turned to his blue ones, and they were swimming with tears. For the minute she didn't seem to think of herself or the scantiness of what she wore.

"Dad! He's hurt! He must've been startin' the supper fire and the oil exploded! He always used it! Look! His head's all cut!"

IT WAS worse than that, but Sudden couldn't bring himself to tell her just then. John Derring's skull was cracked over one ear. The white streaks that showed in the slight flow of scarlet fluid was brains. Derring had been murdered, and it had been meant that he was to burn with the cabin.

It must have happened while the girl was in one of the lean-to rooms changing clothes. Sudden was quick to think why the girl had not been eradicated along with her dad, and then he imagined she wasn't important to Black Bart or Derring's redheaded woman. Or maybe they hadn't known she was around.

"Get outside or we'll be corralled by the fire!" again commanded Sudden, lifting the body of Derring. "We'll see about yore dad!"

Even as he carried Derring, with the hot blaze beating in his face and the smoke choking him, Sudden could not keep his eyes from the girl. He could understand now why middle-aged, hard-jawed Sheriff Ponder came riding to the Derring cabin. The owlhooters had kept track of that when raids on grazing stock were planned, or the robbing of some lone creek prospector was on hand.

The heat of the flaming cabin sent Sudden across the clearing and into the edge of the pines with Derring's worn body in his arms. And as he gained the shelter of the trees, he saw Black Bart and the redheaded woman again.

"In the old well, not the new diggin'!" the woman cried after Black Bart. "Behind them stones in the third row! It's the map of

Red Horse gulch an' shows the discovery! The dumb, old coot was slick in holdin' off to keep from causin' a rush!"

Rita Derring was again down beside her dad's body. This time, Sudden lifted her and damned if he could get a dally around the thing that swept over him. For she saw now that her dad was dead, and her soft cheeks were wet. She needed any comfort that could be given, and Sudden pulled her close to him and kissed her lightly—at first.

He swore at himself inside then, for it was one helluva time and place to change a comforting kiss into a savage pressure against her red lips. A helluva time and place to feel his spine and his neck go cold, and to tighten his arms until her soft breasts were crushed to his shirt and the touch of bare legs against him started the pulse pounding in his temples.

Perhaps it was the wave of shocked emotion, the reaction from realizing her dad was dead at their feet, for her lips parted and quivered and she was clinging to Sudden as if he had always been in her life. Outlaw that he outwardly was, she never had seen him before.

Sudden damned himself for what he was doing, and he ironed out his will to put her away from him.

"Oh!" she gasped. "Oh! What made me do that? Dad!"

Sudden was debating swiftly. He couldn't take her with him to the owlhooters camp in the malpais. She must have clothes, and the nearest house was in Snake Gulch. Sudden knew he was about as welcome in the town as a rattlesnake or a copperhead in a waddy's bedroll.

So he wasn't sure what he intended doing, but he said, "I'm Jim Cassidy, known as Sudden, an' I'm seein' you're safe in town. I got my slicker on the hoss, an' I'm thinkin' it might be a peart idea for you to be puttin' on the same."

Damned if Rita Derring didn't realize then for the first time that she was wearing a helluva lot less than any filly should wear out on the open range. Warm pinkness flooded her rounded throat and spread down toward her breasts.

"Oh!" she gulped, and her work-worn, strong hands pulled at the thin cotton underthings as if she could make them cover a bit more of her.

BUT Black Bart was cursing vilely over by an old well, and throwing out mossy stones. The redheaded woman was screaming at him.

"The old coot put it there, I'm tellin' yuh!"

Black Bart glared at her and cursed. And then the hoofs of several horses clicked over the stones of a small creek that ran down from the pines and watered the grazing land. Sudden saw Black Bart rear to his feet, hands dropping to his low-slung irons. Half a dozen riders were riding hell bent for the scene of the fire.

Black Bart started running and the redheaded woman picked up her skirts and ran with him. Sudden heard Black Bart curse at her.

"Damn' yuh!" he snarled.

"Yuh'd better git that map fer me or—"

Then it was the bulky, hard-jawed Sheriff Ponder who came around the burning cabin, loping his horse. Sudden saw the figures of the other riders a little bit behind the sheriff. Ponder jerked a carbine from his saddle boot, reined his cayuse to a sliding stop, and leveled the weapon at Black Bart, now almost to the trees.

Black Bart whirled, both six-guns coming into his hands and smoking. The distance was not too great for short guns. Sudden had seen Black Bart pick off the nose of a pack rat in the rocks at twenty yards with one of those same guns. Sudden's own hoglegs jumped into his hands.

Black Bart was vital to his plans, and he must be kept alive if possible. If he gunned down Sheriff Ponder, the others of the small posse would sure enough trail him down. But although Black Bart's irons jumped, jolted and roared, the eye that could pick out the nose of a pack rat seemed to be off.

The lead was poisoning nothing but the ground beyond the sheriff. And with a dead aim, his horse stopped, Sheriff Ponder triggered the carbine. That slug went wild, too. But Sudden's cracking guns didn't send any random bullets. One of Black Bart's guns dropped from a nerveless hand where lead had ripped across the back of his wrist. And he stopped shooting with the other gun at the sheriff as he heeled around toward this new attack.

But Sudden was back in the trees, and while he was in view of Sheriff Ponder, Black Bart failed to see who had fired that shot.

The sheriff had missed seeing Sudden until he had sliced Black Bart's gun hand, and when he did see Sudden, Rita's slim, nearly nude body was close beside him.

"The damn' owlhooters!" bellowed Sheriff Ponder, swinging his carbine toward Sudden. "There's one of 'em got Derring's gal! They burnt the cabin!"

Bullets thucked then from several guns into the trees around Sudden.

"Keerful!" yelled the sheriff. "Don't hit the gal! Git the skunk what grabbed 'er!"

"No! No!" screamed Rita. "Lark! Lark! He ain't any owlhooter! He brought out dad!"

The whamming guns abruptly stopped, for the slender, beautiful girl ran into the clearing. She made a picture of darting whiteness, her bare feet touching the ground lightly, and the shapely legs carrying her swiftly toward the horses.

Sudden heard the crashing of bushes as two horses started away. Black Bart and his redhead had made it to their nags, and were lighting a shuck out of the way of flying lead. Sudden judged quickly that he had no further immediate business with the sheriff and his posse. He was sure that Black Bart had missed seeing him.

He saw Sheriff Ponder yanking a rolled slicker from the back of his saddle. Rita Derring would be all right now. But there was an empty sickness in Sudden's innards, and he couldn't guess why at the minute. He was too busy

fading into the thickly bushed trees near the clearing.

THE unexpected appearance of the girl in her unclad condition held up the Snake Gulch citizens riding with Ponder. Sudden was only a few yards from his red bay horse when he crashed into the clump of rhododendrons.

He groped around, recalling what he had seen. His fingers touched cold metal. He held the iron poker of a stove. The blood smearing it was still fresh enough to be red. A few gray hairs stuck to it.

So that had been it. John Derring's woman had murdered him. She had killed him and fired the cabin, probably because of her mad infatuation for Black Bart. Even as he thrust the poker into a saddle bag and forked the bay, Sudden's mind was working.

Black Bart was riding with the redheaded woman toward the *malpais* camp. It struck Sudden that Black Bart was more set upon horning in on a creek gold discovery than he was in looping in a woman critter. For Black Bart, as Sudden had known him, played the fillies all the way from dance-hall gals to such straying women of the range as would have to do with his ways. And he had the looks, this Black Bart, with his hard, lean face and his tall, broad body.

"Kind-a loco," he muttered, "that Black Bart could-a clean missed Sheriff Ponder at seventy-five yards, an' the sheriff couldn't nohow hit him with a carbine at dead aim."

The red bay was taking the hogback hill through the pines with a long easy stride. Lead whittled bark off some of the pines behind Sudden, but he was soon losing the sheriff and his small posse.

"By the time they pry into the ashes of that cabin," he mused aloud, "there won't be none of 'em think-a lookin' for Derring's busted head."

Again Sudden was pondering on the bad shooting between the sheriff and Black Bart. It put an idea into his brain, but that was about as loco as the woman's story that John Derring had hidden the map of a gold creek.

Once more Sudden was wondering why his innards were weak and sick. It hadn't been the first time he had looked upon sudden death by violence. Then what was it?

All at once he knew. Rita Derring. She was the neatest filly that had ever been in his arms. He guessed that for a minute her kiss had spooked him. And Sheriff Ponder had been riding out to the Derring place. Now the sheriff had the girl in his care.

And Sudden Cassidy would be about as welcome in Snake Gulch as a plague of locusts. The sheriff would have it all his own way.

"Dangnation!" sputtered Sudden. "I ain't never seen the gal afore today! She'll be all right with the law lookin' after her!"

But it didn't change the way he felt. And he knew now he didn't want the law looking after her. He could have changed several things with that badge in his boot, but he had set out to put the brand upon the real boss of Black Bart's owl-hooters, and he had never pulled leather before until the iron of the

law smoked the hide of the hombre he was after.

THE salty *malpais* was enough to make a man curse just to look at it. Desolate hummocks and shallow gulches stretched away for miles. At only one spot in these badlands was it possible for man or beast to survive. A sweet artesian spring bubbled up here.

Black Bart and a couple of dozen of his killers held this spot. Black Bart and Sudden occupied a sod dugout, built from the grass that grew lush around the good soil near the spring. Sudden came riding down upon the low dugout, with its grass sod roof.

He saw a group of the outlaws on the other side of the spring. They were swigging from a bottle of red-eye and splitting the profits of the last raid by drawing poker hands. Sudden noticed their faces turned toward the dugout, and the drunken weaving of their bodies.

Sudden was convinced Black Bart and his redheaded woman must have made it through the pines. So they had been ahead of him crossing the malpais. He slipped from the hull of the red bay, pulled off the saddle and rubbed the horse's sweated hair as the beast started cropping on the grass.

"O-oooooh! Bart! Don't! In heaven's name, don't!"

The cry was thin, as if from some place underground. Sudden's keen eyes turned upon the smoke pipe for the air and the stove, set into the top of the sod dugout. The frantic, pain-filled plea of a woman's voice floated out.

Sudden's high-heeled boots made no sound in the thick grass before the hut. The door of pinon wood was closed. He could hear a moaning, the harsh, snarling words of Black Bart.

"Damn' yuh! Yuh went an' hid thet gold crick map on me so's yuh could crack the whip! Whar is it, 'fore I let this knife slip all the way inter yore guts!"

"Bart! In heaven's name! Don't! It's hurtin' so! I ain't seen the map since the old coot—Bart —Oh!"

Sudden's hand went instinctively to the cedar butt of a gun. Black Bart had to be kept alive and he must not suspect Sudden Cassidy as being other than a long rider. But there was a limit.

He pushed the door open only inches. Because most of it was underground, the sod dugout was lighted by an oil lamp. What Sudden saw would have turned the stomach of any man.

The redheaded Derring woman was the kind that a man as old as John Derring never should have hitched up with. Her shapely, flexible body was fashioned to match the sleepy look in her long-lashed green eyes. She had silk stuff over her heaving breasts, which no other woman on the Snake Gulch range would have had the gumption to wear, there was so little of it.

The same was true of the foamy panties that were belted at her waist and did little more than conceal her upper thighs. And when Sudden saw her now, Black Bart had her across the pine slab table. Her arms were pulled back and down and were tied to the table

(Continued on page 112)

By BART GILVIN

The pliant rope left Angus' hand in a fast wide loop.

NOEL ANGUS eased the "peacemaker" iron on his right thigh and swore between suddenly set teeth. His sorrel gelding pawed and lifted flaring nostrils at the nearby gunsmoke. Three carefully spaced shots came from the mesquite ridge off to the right. Their sharp cranging reports said they were from a musket.

A blue uniformed post captain with yellow stripes down his tight trouser legs was in the rutted barranca directly ahead. One of his legs jerked at the first shot. His corded hat lost a tassel at the second. His heavy black horse reared up and snorted at the third as if a bee had stung his nose.

"Right peart shootin'," muttered Noel Amos. "But too damn' peart. Now who in the tangled hell—?"

He pulled his cayuse off to one side, tense and watchful.

"Ain't nobody but Cap MacRae himself," he said. "An' what he ain't got on the Big Sioux reservation is a lot o' friends, red an' white, but that ain't redskin shootin'. Whoa! Hell! He's tailin' it back!"

Captain MacRae was tailing it, as Noel Angus put it. The wide openness of the barranca evidently was not to his liking. He was lying low over the saddle pommel and putting his black horse into a striding run.

"That pilgrim up there could've have punched one o' his brass but-

SHOOTIN' ARMY GAL

What Cap McRae didn't have on the Sioux reservation was a lot of friends, white or red! But these shots from ambush weren't redskin shooting .... It was lead poison from a girl!

tons, but he didn't,'' surmised Noel Angus, swerving his own mount and picking out a draw that would carry him toward the hidden marksman in the mesquite. ''Looks as how that lead poison was meant only for a warnin'. About time some'un put a dally in MacRae's snaky loop, but none o' the Red River settlers would-a tried it 'thout word to me. An'—easy, Blaze!''

Angus gripped a tough, lean hand upon his sorrel's leathers. For a white spotted pinto pony burst out of the mesquite as spooky as a tumbleweed riding a prairie wind. At first Angus imagined the runaway was riderless.

Then—''Great God'' he rasped out. ''It's a dang' kid, an' the hoss throwed him—''

THE squirming figure, caught by one foot in a stirrup, did have the appearance of a button. The small body, clad in fringed buckskin, was jouncing and hitting the ground, as the unhorsed rider made desperate efforts to double and grab a handful of saddle cinch or gear.

Angus saw an army musket hit the mesquite bush and bounce away, and it was simple to guess that the dragged rider must be the marksman who had just taken the gulching pot shots at Captain MacRae. Then Angus guessed something else, as he veered his sorrel at the proper tangent to head off the pinto.

Undoubtedly the thrown rider had dismounted when the shots were fired, then had swung for the pony's hull and had been tossed by a sudden leap of the half-wild paint. Angus thumbed the copper honda down on the loop of his rope, freeing it, bringing the sorrel neck and neck with the pinto in the uneven, rocky malpais.

At the same time, Angus instinctively coocked an eye over his shoulder and saw that Captain MacRae was still riding hell-bent for the Big Sioux post stockade a little more than a mile away. Also there was a small cloud of white alkali dust whooming up close to the fort itself, indicating riders coming to the captain's rescue.

''Damme!'' gritted Angus, even as he lifted and swung his loop. ''It'll be hell-for-leather on a short trail when MacRae gets to the troop! Damn' loco for a wanted owlhooter to be ridin' into this ruckus—''

Swish!

The pliant rope of cured Buffalo hide left Angus's hand fast and wide. Its loop hooked under the pinto's near forefoot and wrapped all the way around the body of the helpless rider. The sorrel stiffened on his forelegs and the rope smoked and tightened on the horn.

Angus went tense and a little sick. That dally spelled either instant relief or death for the dragged rider. The pinto stumbled and rolled, and the stirrup leather broke. Angus hit the ground on quick feet, glanced back toward the hewn logs of the post stockade, and he scooped the figure in soft buckskin into his arms.

What he had feared and expected then happened. Blue smoke puffed from the distant dust cloud of troopers. The unmistakable whanging of army muskets started the nearby mesquite fanning and sing-

ing with a volley of lead. A bullet thucked into the body of the rolling pinto as Angus sprang back, holding the light body in his arms and handing himself into the saddle.

The wham-wham of muskets and the mean whine of lead increased on the clear Dakota air. Then Angus was putting the sorrel to his best pace, with the limp figure of the unconscious rider cushioned over his legs. He headed for the first dry wash that dipped into the Red River badlands. There he reversed his direction and doubled back on the trail he knew the post troop probably would take in pursuit.

Angus reached a shallow ford, splashed through it and into a thicket of scrub pine. He keened his ears to any thumping of hoofs that would indicate that Captain MacRae and his men might have detected his ruse. Then Angus went through what looked like a solid wall of green bushes, and behind this he was in black rocks below a rising hogback.

He eased the sorrel down and his gray eyes held a grim smile. In those black rocks were a few of his own hombres, waiting. He had been riding straight into the Big Sioux post, expecting under the cover of approaching darkness further to blacken his own reputation as an outlaw.

For he had expected to seize the best known girl in all of the Red River range, the daughter of Colonel Thurston, post commander. He had intended to make the girl become a ransom stake for the lives and rights of more than a hundred Red River settlers. And the girl would have been as safe in the hands of Noel Angus as she was in her father's quarters.

WELL, the inexplicable attack upon Captain MacRae by this loco kid had delayed his plans, but here he was, riding into the wilderness of black rocks with a limp figure in his arms.

Angus rolled off near a clear mountain spring. If the eyes of his own Red River men were upon him, it was possible they would believe that he had already accomplished his purpose by some lucky or daring coup.

"An' now, younker," said Angus, "we'll see if you come through this ruckus with a whole skin, an' find what in time roiled you into makin' a target out'n the captain's hat tassel? Damn him, he's the one that's backin' the Black Riders in chasin' out honest men!"

Angus sopped his bandanna in the spring and he loosened the thonged strings that held the rescued rider's buckskin shirt.

"Great glory be!"

Right here the normally clear, hard reasoning of Noel Angus, reputed bad man and Dakota killer, damned up on him. The warm, smooth softness of skin under his hand sent an icy chill all the way to the back of his neck.

Angus snatched his hand away as fast as if he had touched a coiled rock rattler. But he could not pull his eyes from the dainty throat that shadowed into a valleyed cleft of a young girl's maturing bosom.

"Great glory be!" ejaculated Angus again. "A filly, an' gunnin' for Cap MacRae? What the hell—"

The hell at this minute was a pair of the sweetest curved lips that

Angus had ever seen. A little more hell was in the rising and falling of the firm young bosom, in the torn buckskin that exposed the neatest knee and thigh that Angus had ever seen.

Now which settler's daughter could she be? There were several new families in the Red River valley whom Angus had never seen, although he had oiled his peacemaker guns in their behalf.

Which one of the new gal critters had guessed that the troops on Big Sioux post were being used to help the Black Riders in robbing law-abiding settlers of their lands and their rights?

All he knew at this minute was that this eye-filling lady had been personally gunning for Captain MacRae. Or had she been?

Angus was recalling those musket shots. That lead had swung too straight and too true to have been misplaced. A bullet had nicked a yellow-threaded leg. Another had cut the tassel off the officers' hat. The third had apparently flicked the captain's horse across the nostrils.

You didn't shoot so closely and so expertly just by chance.

The eyes of Angus swept the black rocks and his teeth gritted. Nothing stirred. The dropping sun hid the Dakota Hills. There came to his ears a faint thudding of hoofs which brought a hard grin.

"Ride 'em to hell, you braided owlhooters an' see if I give a damn!"

He was about to purse his lips into a whistling cry. It was like the high, shrill yelp of some lone lobo had Angus completed the signal. It was a call known to a chosen few of Red River's nerviest gun hands who had set themselves up to block crooked land grabbers. Land looters who controlled a few renegade troopers of Big Sioux post.

Then the girl's sweet, clean lips parted a little and she gave a long sigh of returning consciousness. Slight as it was, a sudden crack of thunder could not have had a more devastating effect upon big Noel Angus.

The girl's arms with the browned and strong little hands were flung wide. The long lashes of her eyelids quivered. Glossy black hair, as wild and tangled as running berry vines, tumbled into view from under the furred raccoon cap she wore.

Suddenly Angus seemed to be drawn toward the oval, tanned face that contrasted so sharply with the creamy white skin where the collar of the shirt had been opened.

"Spooked, sure as hell!" gritted Angus, even as he bent swiftly and kissed the tempting mouth, his hard arm lifting the girl's head until her soft and yielding shoulders were drawn against his breast.

Her eyes remained closed, but sudden, responsive life trembled through the lovely figure and her hands reached up, as if in a dream, and pulled Angus closer. Well, Noel Angus had kissed but few women along the hard riding borders of his life, and now it seemed to him he had never before kissed any woman.

Lips and body belonged to Angus for a long minute, until he was hating himself for giving away to an impulse he could not understand. Upon which he caught the girl's wrists, put her arms away and said,

thickly, "Ma'am, I sure didn't mean to—"

Lids fluttered from over the bewildered, appealing eyes. She said, incredibly—

"I'll get Noel Angus—" Then her voice went into a bursting sob. "He's the one—Noel Angus—I'll get him myself!"

It was unlucky for Angus that the words had the explosive effect of a bombshell upon his amazed consciousness. Although his gun slinging reputation was widely known, and his name was plastered through the Red River country on $1,000 reward posters, it was a loco idea that this rescued girl gunnie should know him.

"Great glory be!" grunted Angus. "You sure can't be knowin' me, ma'am—"

He ceased speaking, for he could see that the wildly sobbing girl was still out of her head and not accountable for what she was saying. So Angus picked up his soaked bandanna and applied the cloth gently to her face and eyes, and—

FROM several places among the jagged black rocks there came

He loosened the shirt of the unconscious rider.

spine chilling movement, the rubbing of metal on stone. It was the furtive but sure preparation of ambushers who must have crept up under cover of the fast descending darkness. Angus had failed to hear them during the brief, delirious minutes when he had kissed the stranger girl, and heard her startling outburst and use of his name.

He was glad the girl was again quiet and limp. It was so dark in the bowl of rocks that the lurking ambushers could not be sure of their location, although they had heard the girl's voice.

"Couldn't be none o' the boys," gritted Angus, his mind upon his own Red River hombres. "So it's got to be some o' the Black Riders an' maybe Cap MacRae with a few renegade troopers—So—"

Angus was fully aware that his death was much more desired than collection of the $1,000 reward upon his head. His peacemaker .45s would be of little service against the hidden skulkers.

"Could give the boys the kyoot call," he muttered. "But that means maybe killin' we wouldn't be wantin'. 'Tain't sense to start a ruckus 'thout havin' the makin's of a showdown in our own hands. If I could-a grabbed old Colonel Thurston's gal first—?"

No good now, that locoed scheme. A plan that, while lawless, had been intended solely to drive home to Colonel Thurston himself the truth of what some of his own officers and troops had been doing to evict lawful settlers for the land grabbing Black Riders.

The spot where Angus now crouched tensely beside the girl was in the slight hollow by the cold spring. The man's quick eyes took in all of the chances out of the black rock bowl, and saw no trail along which he might swing his sorrel, carrying the girl, without collecting sure lead poison, possibly for both of them.

The girl stirred and moaned. Angus muffled her soft lips with one hand. Then his vision picked out one desperate chance, if not of escape, at least of opportunity to use his irons until he would be gunned out.

Below the spring, but a few yards away, a huge rock loomed oddly against the darkness. All sides of it were sheer and Angus knew that its top was flat. A chance, yes. But the rim at the top was slightly above the level of a man who might be mounted on a horse.

"Might work—an' if it don't—"

The sorrel gelding stood waiting close beside the spring, nipping at green Buffalo grass. The sorrel was a smart and willing cayuse, and Angus sometimes believed had had reason enough to understand much of his master's words when he talked to the beast on lonely trails.

Up swung Angus, lithe and quick, the limp girl once more cradled in one crooked arm. He held his breath, still hearing the faint but distinct movements of the killers lying in wait. His fear was for the sudden blast of irons, the biting of lead into the body of the girl.

He had to risk that. Now he was beside the gelding, crouched, and then he was in the hull with striding leap, reining the sorrel about.

The first clicking of the sorrel's iron shod hoofs as he turned on

bunched feet brought the zinging rain that Angus had feared. Guns cranged! Reddish blue slashes of wicked fire stabbed from all directions!

The mean whine of flattened lead ricocheting off rock hedged the leaping horse in what seemed a barbed barrier of death. Shooting by sound, with the figures of horse, man and girl little more than a vague, fast moving blur, the ambushers could count only upon the luck of their bullets cutting down the much wanted outlaw of Red River.

"God!" grated Angus as the strain of the horse's jump swung the unconscious girl's weight upon his arm and his left leg numbed under a jolting rap.

Then the sorrel was beside the flat-topped rock, already running. None of the cursing, shooting gulchers could see what happened in the deeper blackness beside the bulk of the huge rock.

ANGUS put all his rawhide strength into the upward heave that lifted the girl and sent her over the rim and onto the rock's wide, flat top. It was then that Angus checked the sorrel just enough to raise his lean length in the stirrups, grip the edge of the big rock and swing himself free.

"Go it, Blaze!" he intoned between his teeth as his fingers slipped and it appeared for a second or two that he would be hurled to the ground below. "Run, you damn' bronc—run to hell an' gone —an' luck to you, fella!"

The sorrel's flying hoofs pounded, scarcely missing a beat. There was the even hair's chance that a smashing slug might down the cayuse. Angus got himself onto the top, freeing his irons and making ready.

If the horse was hit and dropped, the air hereabouts was due to become unpleasantly filled with buzzing death when it was discovered the animal was riderless. Nip and tuck! Anus held his breath, and then expelled it with heaving relief.

"Good fella, Blaze!" he said huskily, as much for the escape of the horse as for the success of his ruse thus far.

For cursing men were running among the rocks. Commands rapped out to the cayuses being held some distance away.

"Get the damn' catamount!" barked a harsh voice that Angus instantly identified as that of Captain MacRae himself. "He took the girl with him! We gun down Noel Angus or there'll be hell roarin' all over the Big Sioux! It was damn' good we pulled off them other Red River hellers!"

One arm laid across the girl's soft figure, making sure she was in a safe postion, Angus had his mind more confused in one way and cleared up in another.

It was evident Captain MacRae was dead set upon getting this stranger settler's girl. Perhaps there was some personal hate or fear in that. Angus had but the unexplained bullet baiting of MacRae by the girl a short time before to account for whatever animus lay between them.

MacRae's own words had just told him why none of his own Red River men had appeared at the first sound of shooting. Angus had instructed his own small band of

"owlhooters" to be watchful for any sign of trouble that might interfere with his intended seizure of Colonel Thurston's daughter within the Big Sioux post itself. That seizure was to have been aided by Lot Kee, a Chinese long trusted by the Red River settlers as being on their side.

But MacRae and the Black Riders had undoubtedly tricked the other Red River hombres away. Angus swore under his breath as he realized what the trick might have been. Perhaps another settler's cabin had been fired and was now in ashes. Or there might have been another cowardly killing.

These were the things that had been happening. And they were crimes for which Noel Angus and his own men had been blamed. Not by the victimized settlers, but by the Black Rider grabbers and their chief ally inside Big Sioux post, Captain MacRae.

Blocked from getting the truth before Colonel Thurston or others high in authority, Angus had been inspired to the desperate attempt to seize Colonel Thurston's daughter, being convinced this would give him the opportunity to force the post commander to listen to facts.

THE last faint drumming of hoofs faded out. Cut off from his men, dismounted, with the mysterious settler's girl on his hands, Angus realized the time for showdown action was at hand. No doubt Cap MacRae and the Black Riders would be combing the hills for him, even if they succeeded in overtaking his riderless sorrel.

A new and daring idea looped Angus's brain. While this hunt was on, perhaps he could get directly to Colonel Thurston inside the post stockade. If he followed out his original plan to seize the girl, he would have to add the slight, hanging offense of stealing a horse.

Then here was the girl beside him on the rock.

"Got to get her somewhere out of the way of that skunk captain, no matter what brought on that right pert shootin' o' hers," mused Angus. "But how—"

"Hist, Angus!"

The voice came from the darkness below the rock.

"Buck Kellar, bigod!" jerked from Angus's lips. "Might-a knowed he'd be stickin' around—Buck!"

Buck Keller, who had lost a cabin and cattle, had been Angus's loyal chief aide in their feud wth the land grabbers.

"You all o' one piece, Angus?" said Kellar below. "snuck around that damn' MacRae's men, an' 'lowed I'd locate you. Was it the colonel's gal you was totin' when you rode into this hole? If'n it be, I've got hosses an' you can hole up in the cabin we fixed until I git the news to Colonel Thurston?"

"No, 'tain't her, Buck," replied Angus. "I was thinkin' maybe she is one of them new settlers at the south end. Maybe one o' the Barkleys, whose women folks I ain't ever seen. But now you'll have to be seein' she's taken home, while I take one of the hosses and hit it straight for the post. Either we have a showdown tonight, Buck, or maybe our goose'll be cooked. Mac-

With all his might he heaved her up onto the ledge.

Rae an' the grabbers are out for blood this time."

"Shucks!" growled Buck Kellar disgustedly. "Here I was fixin' to help you loop old Thurston, even if we had to hogtie him an' tote him off instead of makin' him come to rescue his gal! An' now—"

"Bring the hosses, Buck!" said Angus with grim humor. "I'll do the ridin' into the post, an' if I ain't grabbed first, I'll be comin' back with the colonel's girl or the old ranny himself!"

"Loco idee!" came from Buck. "An' all I git is a damn' ride! I don't hanker after nursin' hellion gals—"

Angus smiled grimly as Buck stumped away after the horses.

ALL this time, Angus had kept a hand lightly touching the girl's arm. His thought now was to attempt to revive her before Buck should return with the horses. She had not stirred, but now—

A cool, small hand touched Angus's roughly bearded cheek. A low sigh came from the girl's lips and her slight, perfect figure shifted suddenly closer.

"So you're Noel Angus?" she murmured softly. "Noel Angus—I came to find you—to—oh—I heard what you said just now—and—"

Perhaps it was the chill of darkness, her wanting to be comforted, or the reaction of great relief at finding herself here, after the terror-filled minutes when she had been dragged by her runaway pinto. She was suddenly clinging close to Angus, her soft, black hair touching his face, her compact, rounded curves crushed to him with the quivering feel of her pounding heart becoming a part of him.

"Great glory—"

Dammit! This was no time for dallying! He felt vast relief that the girl at last had returned to consciousness. But that was no reason, no reason at all for a posted owl-hooter hombre to act as if he had swallowed a double dose of loco weed. No time either to forget everything else for the damnable appeal of those trembling, perfect thighs, or to remember the sculptured whiteness that had been revealed by the torn buckskin an hour or more before at the spring.

Their lips met, and Angus could feel his mouth becoming dry and feverish under the compelling demand of the clean, warm lips that responded to his own.

"God—"

It was a husky, whispered sound in Angus's throat, as the fresh warmth of tempting curves melted to his body and his hands sensed the bent yielding of the girl's back.

"God—"

He groaned that much again, vaguely thinking that he was being completely spooked, and that if he didn't take a dally in the impulse that drove him, he would be deliberately giving away to the advantage he held. Nothing but hysteria could be actuating this kind of girl to make her kiss a caress that probably didn't meet up with any wild riding hombre more than once in a lifetime.

"Please, Noel Angus," she whispered hoarsely, freeing her lips only long enough to make herself heard. "I'm ashamed—what's the matter with me? I can't even see your face—I've only heard of you—but when I heard you speak—I knew, Noel Angus, that I—that we—"

"Damn you, yes!" he gritted, his arms tightening. "I'm seein' how it is—how we—"

"Oh, hold me tighter—"

It didn't make any more sense than some mountain bronc running head-on into barbed wire, but there it was. Angus had known other women critters, many of them, and there had been kisses, the kind that a ridin', shootin' scout picks up along the way, but this wasn't that kind.

Angus's brain seemed to knot into whirls of fever and their lips were welded together again as she

threw her head far back and clung to him—

THE horses were being brought by Buck Kellar. Angus was standing, lifting the girl in his arms, preparing to swing her down from the wide, flat rock.

"You mentioned the Barkleys, darling," she said. "I'm, well, I'm Ruth Barkley, and you never saw me before. But I'm not riding home with the man you call Buck. I'm going with you, Noel Angus. I—well, today I might have killed Captain MacRae, but I didn't. He had been to our clearing, demanding that my dad give up his land, and saying he knew dad was one of your men and that you were an outlaw killer. Are you an outlaw killer, honey?"

"They term me an outlaw, Ruth Barkley," he said grimly. "As for killin'—"

Her hand went swiftly over his mouth.

"Don't tell me, darling," she whispered fiercely. "I should be ashamed of tonight, but I'll never be—if you are riding to see Colonel Thurston, to kidnap his daughter to compel him to listen to the truth, I'm going with you—"

"No," he said firmly. "There's like as not to be shootin' an' I ain't for takin' such a chance. You'll go with Buck, an' when this is over, I'll be ridin' to—"

She was slim and erect, and she stood with her glowing face just lifted to the level of his chin. She kissed him so suddenly and freed herself from his arms that he was taken by surprise. The disgusted Buck had the horses standing close to the big rock.

"I'm going to the post with you, Noel Angus—"

The words whipped from her lips, for she was springing from the rock as lightly as a deer. She was in the saddle of a snorting blue grulla gelding, and she had snatched the lead rein from Buck's hand before that surprised hombre could tighten his grip on the leather.

"Stop her, Buck!" cried out Angus. "Ruth—honey—wait! You can't—"

"Ruth—honey?" exploded from Buck's tongue. "Honey? Well, jehosiphat! Can you tie that?"

Even then Buck was doing his best to bring his own prancing nag around, and Angus was already in the saddle of the other cayuse that Buck had brought. Angus shouted again.

"Ruth! Come back! That malpais is hell! You can't—"

Well, earlier, the amazing Ruth Barkley had proved she could do some "right pert" shooting, and now she was doing a "perter" piece of riding. The blue grulla was of wild hill stock, and he avoided jagged rocks with the sureness of a goat.

"Hell! Angus, you cain't head off that smoky blue devil!" yelled Buck, as they sent their horses crashing after the fleeing girl. "An' if we crowd her, maybe so she'll git tossed, so—"

"Yup!" snapped Angus. "Buck! You swing off on the short trail to Red River, an' be seein' what the other boys might be doin'! If I get to Colonel Thurston now, it'll have to be a straight out play on

(Continued on page 123)

Tumbleweed Thaws

(Continued from page 17)

But Tom wouldn't talk, all the way to Hereford. If I asked him something, all the answer I got was the rattling of his teeth! He was the coldest white man I ever saw.

Well, he seemed to head instinctively for the livery stable. Old Man Perkins spat in the snow when I slid off, and grumbled, "You got guts, or else you lack sense coming into town, son." He was a pal of the Staffels, but I didn't answer him for I was busy unwinding Tom. When Tom finally slid down and began shucking off his blankets himself, old man Perkins' mouth sagged clear down to his chin.

SO THERE stood Tom, shaking and shivering in his short Mexican jacket, and he dug into his morrals again and came out with that carved holster and filigreed gun, and he buckled it around his skinny waist with his teeth chattering and clacking.

Old Man Perkins grinned like an ape. "I don't blame you, mister, whoever you are, for being scared. I'd hate to be siding this fool when Jerry Staffel sees him."

You know how sparrows are in a livery barn? Perkins' place was just a big corrugated iron shed, with plenty of rafters overhead, and the sparrows infested it winter and summer alike. You could always hear their silly chittering up high on those dark beams. Well, sir, Tom grinned at Old Man Perkins, and all at once that pretty gun leaped into his hand. He shot twice so fast it sounded like once, and the gun flipped in the air, came down in his left hand, and he shot twice more! He had it in his holster again by the time the third sparrow hit the floor.

"Shucks," he said mild like, "I done missed one. Only got three!" Then while me and Old Man Perkins stood goggled eyed he took out the gun again and pushed out the empties and reloaded. He said, "I sure hate to go out in this cold again, but let's go see this fellow Taylor, the assayer!"

So we did. And as we went out, I heard Old Man Perkins calling for his groom in a high pitched excited voice. He was going to tell Jerry Staffel what had happened.

I'LL never forget Jed Taylor, the assayer. He was a little man, skinny and dried up, with big yellow horse teeth. Tom hit the door of the office without twisting the knob, and plump sprang the door right off one hinge. Taylor whirled and yelped, "What you trying to do? What—oh, it's you, Jones. What do you mean by—"

"Shut up, you worm," growled Tom. It is a funny thing how a peaceful looking skinny fellow like Tom could all at once look like sudden death. His teeth wasn't chattering now, you can bet. Taylor kept backing up before him until the wall stopped him, then Tom wrapped his fingers in the fellow's shirt and began shaking him. He shook him, by golly, until his teeth flew out! And it was the

first time I'd ever known them horseteeth were false.

"My friend here," said Tom, after a while, "brought you some ore samples to assay not long ago. Me, I didn't like that assay. I'm going to be in town a few hours, and I reckon you can change your mind in that length of time. You look me up, do you hear, and try it again. And this time I want the truth!"

He shook him again. "Staffel'll kill you for this," groaned Taylor, and sure enough, I looked out the window and here came Jerry Staffel, mayor of Hereford, and Old Man Perkins, and about twenty others—and right in the lead was Jack Kilday, Storm's no good brother, with the black patch over his eye and looking like an accident hunting a place to happen.

He was the first one in. At first he didn't see Tom, for he was sitting on the corner of a table to one side. Kilday paused there in the door with excited faces behind him, and sort of sneered, "Hello, Effie, dear. I hear you done imported a fancy gunman to do your fighting for you. Where is the skunk? I want to—?"

His voice died away. Did you ever watch a man's face turn grey? It's quite a picture. Kilday's right thumb had been hooked in his belt. Now he took it out, mighty slow and crossed his arms, slow, until he had a shoulder in the palm of each hand. "Tumbleweed Terry," he said in a choked sort of voice. And again, "Tumbleweed Terry!"

Well, sir, I was as surprised as Kilday! Tumbleweed Terry was a name to conjure with, from Canada to the Border! I don't reckon Terry knew how many outlaws he had killed, for he was a lawman, a Texas lawman, a pal of Masterson and Luke Short and the Earps! And here Tom was—Tom? He'd been so cold when he rolled off the horse in front of my house that I'd misunderstood. I'd thought he said "Tom" when all the time he was saying "Tum" which was his nickname.

Tum said, "Hello, Kilday. Long time no see."

Jerry Staffel started to bluster, and Jack Kilday said in an anxious voice, "Shut up, you! Don't start nothing."

Tum laughed, "I rode a long piece for you, Kilday. There's a judge down in Dogtown wants to see you. Understand there's a train out of here this evening. Me and you will ride it."

Kilday, still gray faced, nodded. He said, as if the words hurt him, "You want me to go to jail until train time?"

"Just be there," said Tum, in answer, and his voice got hard and cold as ice. "And be damned sure you're there. I don't feel like running around in this cold hunting you. I might get mad."

The crowd parted to let Jack Kilday through. He went hoofing across the street without even looking back, and disappeared into the Ace High saloon.

JERRY STAFFEL snorted, "You lookee here, mister. You may be a big lawman down in Texas, but we got law here, too. We got a sheriff and deputies, and we got judges. You know damned well you can't take Kilday back south without extradition papers."

"No?" drawled Tumbleweed. "You're dead right there, partner. I can't *take* him. But I can *reason* with him, and persuade him to accompany me! And you all heard me *reason,* didn't you?"

He got off the table. "Come on, Eph, let's go get a drink before I freeze to death. And you—you must be a Staffel, ain't you?" White faced, Jerry nodded. "I got this to say to you, mister. You tell this assayer of yours to pop up with a real report on Eph's mine."

He walked across the room like a big panther, and he was grinning with his mouth, his mustache bristling, but his eyes weren't grinning. He began tapping Staffel's shirt bosom with a long finger. "After your assayer here brings us a report over to the saloon—a report that's already prepared, being ready weeks ago, you come along and talk to the kid here. You been making him offers for his mine and homestead. You show up, do you hear, and make him an offer after he gets a *real* report on it. A *real* offer."

Jerry stepped back, white with anger and I started to follow Tumbleweed. Over his shoulder he shot back, "We'll be expecting you!" I wish you could have heard how those words sounded. Like he was saying he was going to shoot Jerry Staffel at sun rise, come hell or high water!

So after a while we were drinking together at the Ace High, sitting at a table, Tumbleweed practically having the stove in his lap and insisting that the bartender stir him up hot toddies, though he didn't like to do it. And fellows that had always frowned at me and made slurring remarks kept coming in and speaking like they was my best friends, and saying oh and ah in front of Tumbleweed.—By now he had a little gold and silver presentation badge pinned on the *jaqueta,* and I'll tell you he looked every inch the lawman.

Pretty soon he said, "Effie, you sit right here and wait for that report. I got a little business to attend to." And I wasn't even scared to stay there by myself, and while he was gone everybody treated me fine, and bowed and scraped and bought me drinks. A reputation is sure a fine thing. The next best thing, if you can't have a reputation of your own is to have a friend with one.

WE'LL skip over Taylor's arrival with the assay. I took one look at it and let out a whoop. If I was to tell you how rich a lode I'd hit, you wouldn't believe it! Why, no wonder Staffel had tried to make me sell, or run me off, or something. I will say this, even with what little I know of mining, I knew I'd get a hundred thousand or so for my claim.

What did I think of first? Storm, of course. Here Tumbleweed was getting rid of her no-good brother for her, Staffel couldn't make her stay now if she didn't want to, and I'd have plenty of money to spend on her and take her away from it all!

I found Storm stretched out on a couch crying like her heart would break. I remember how she was dressed, in one of them thin black negligees, that lets white satiny flesh sort of gleam through it. I always was a tender hearted guy

where crying women was concerned, and when it came to Storm! It like to have broke my heart to see her crying like that. She sat up, and put her arms around me and told me what it was all about.

She'd known Tumbleweed Terry down in Texas! And she'd left Texas on account of him, he'd been after her so badly, wanted her to be his, well, his girl! And she was mortally afraid!

"It isn't just poor Jack," she sobbed, all warm and rosy on my chest. "He's done wrong and he'll have to pay. It's me I'm thinking of! Tumbleweed's been here! He wants me to dress and pack and meet him—to go back to Texas with him, darling, and I'm afraid not to do it!"

She got up then and swayed across the room and got a bottle. I drank a big slug, I'll tell you, thinking how it would break my heart to lose her, and thinking what a bad one that Tumbleweed was, after all.

She told me all about him, what a lowdown, dirty killer he was, hiding behind a badge for protection but really being as big a crook as any of the badmen he was supposed to have killed. She told me how he'd chased her from one town to the other, and how always as soon as he found her, if she had a sweetheart, Tumbleweed would either kill him or run him off.

She put her arms around me then and held me up close to her soft breasts, so close I could feel her heart beating, and she sobbed, "I'm afraid for you, too, Eph, for if he finds out what we mean to each other he'll kill you! He'll kill us both!"

I tell you, filled up inside with the liquor, and my one arm full of Storm, I felt like I could conquer the world. I said, "Forget him, damn him! The hypocrite! I'll take care of you, darling." Then her lips, moist and red and parted were on mine and her hands were pulling me closer and closer to her. . . .

WHEN I went out of there I was breaking my promise. For tucked inside my arm sling was a .41 derringer. Maybe I reeled a little, from love and liquor both, but I had my mind made up now. I had my assay report. I figured I'd been a fool not to get myself a gun long ago and fight my own battles. I was going to get Tumbleweed Terry told right fast!

Well, I went back to the Ace High, and there was no Tumbleweed. But the bartender nodded his head toward the rear room and said I was wanted there. There was Jerry Staffel, and his Old Man, grim and mean looking as an Indian, and with them was Jack Kilday, all waiting for me and Tumbleweed. I said, "Gents, Tumbleweed is out of this now, I can handle my own affairs. What are you going to offer me for the Empire State Mine, or do I bring in outside capital?" I guess that was liquor talking then.

Jerry answered, "I'm sorry that damned assayer, Taylor, played us all for a fool, Mr. Jones. He was probably trying to get in cheap himself." Now that of course was a danged lie, but I didn't care. He laid out the contracts on the table, and I skimmed through them and took the pen he handed me.

"Wait a minute," said Tumbleweed from the door, and stepped in and picked one up and began to read it. I like to have busted, me being a little drunk, and sore anyway about the way Storm said he'd done her for the last year or so. But you know, he just looked at me, with those cold eyes of his and although the derringer felt pretty big in my sling, I just stood there. He laid the contracts down, sort of thoughtful.

"Mmmmm," he said, "damned if they ain't legal, and it's a pretty good deal. So good it makes me suspicious. Sign 'em, Effie."

Him calling me Effie again! But I signed them both. He handed one to Jerry, folded the other and handed it to me. "Effie," he said, calmly, "if I was you, I'd get that over to Canton, or anywhere but Hereford, and get it in a safe deposit box." He reached and picked up the check that lay on the table, a big check, signed by Staffel, senior. "This, like I said, is so good it stinks. I wouldn't waste any time doing it at all."

Jerry Staffel blustered, "You're crazy, Terry. When I see I've been wrong, I try to make up for it. I reckon Eph can tend to his own business."

I nodded hard.

Tumbleweed yawned, right in our faces. He said, "Okay, suppose you all get out of here and start tending it, then. I got to ride the train all night and I need some sleep."

He took off his hat and tossed it to one side. He turned his back and walked away toward the cot in the corner. With a big flourish he unbuckled his gun belt and tossed it after the hat. Before it hit, Jack Kilday yelped something and danged if he didn't go for his gun. Old Man Staffel was reaching for his own, Jerry's hand was flying.

Maybe I hollered, "Tom!" I like to think I did. But it wasn't necessary. Tumbleweed Terry's gun hadn't reached the cot itself until he was falling sideways, sort of twisting as he fell, and just like greased lightning he had another gun in his hand, pulled out of his *jaqueta!* There were four shots, all so fast as to be almost one report. Then the smoke cleared away and you could hear the ticking of my watch in my pants pocket, or heck, it might have been my heart.

Tumbleweed was in the corner, a wisp of smoke coming out of the muzzle of his gun. His eyes were like points of flame, and I'll swear even his mustache was bristling. His mouth was just a thin, black slot and altogether he looked like he hoped he'd get a chance to start in on *me!* I was so scared, just looking at him, I raised my good hand, just like Jerry Staffel had both his raised! Jerry Staffel, that had never even got in a shot!

Old Man Staffel was sitting against the door clutching his right shoulder and letting cuss words in English, Spanish and Piute trickle out of his mouth. Tumbleweed said, "I figured that was the play. Gun me, then take care of the kid. Shut up, old man! Have a look at that carrion there. It could just as easy be you." He walked over to Jerry, stuck his gun back in his *jaqueta,* doubled up his fist and cracked it against Jerry's jaw.

"I'm leaving tonight, crosser," he growled in a voice that sent chills all over me, "but I don't ever want to hear you went back on that contract." Then he strapped on his filigreed butted gun, and motioned for me to go on out ahead of him. I looked down at Jack Kilday, and got sort of sick. He had three eyes now, only one of them was black and red and sort of greyish, where brains mixed with the blood.

At the bar I said, sort of dull, "Why'd you have to kill him? You knew if you turned your back, they'd try. You might as well have murdered him!" He just looked funny. "After all," I went on, "he was *her* brother!"

He began to laugh. But it wasn't the kind of laughter a man uses when he's tickled. He began to talk about fools, he talked about madmen, and he spoke of youngsters not dry behind the ears. He called me every name I could think of and some I couldn't. Then, by golly, he took me by the ear! Right in front of everyone he took me over to the livery stable, and he put me on his horse, and he started me for home. He kept right on cussing me until the last. Then he called a funny thing. He yelled, "Tell the squaw to keep your nose wiped and to teach you some sense and manners!"

Maybe you think it's funny I went on home. All right, I was scared. He'd just the same as murdered poor Jack Kilday, I thought then. And I was ashamed, too, him treating me like a kid before all the fellows in the saloon. I wanted worst of all to see Tilly, and tell her about it. Tilly would understand. She'd know how for me to square myself with Storm.

She was there, too, waiting to see what had happened. There was still some of that tequila left, and on top of what I'd had I got pretty big headed. I got to telling what I was going to do to Tumbleweed for murdering Storm's brother, and altogether probably I was pretty disgusting. But she didn't say much. Just sat listening and watching me until it got dark. There was a funny light in her eyes, though.

I showed her my copy of the contract and the check, and promptly forgot all about them. Until after dark. Then. . . .

AT FIRST I thought it was the wind. A storm had come up, and I couldn't decide for sure whether it was Storm's voice or not, calling, "Oh, Eph, come and get me, Eph, come, come!"

I got up from the table. There was Tilly barring the door, in my way. She said, "Don't open that door, Eph, don't you do it! It's some sort of trap." And she ran over and blew out the light leaving us in darkness.

"Eph, please Eph, it's Storm. Open up, Eph!" I stumbled toward the door. Tilly was still there, trying to hold me back. "It's the Staffels, Eph, they're coming to get you! Open up! I want to warn you about them!"

Coming to warn me, bless her heart! I was like a different fellow. I doubled up my fist and struck out. I felt it hit soft flesh, yielding flesh, Tilly moaned a little and thudded to the floor. I pushed her aside with my foot and jerked the

door wide. "Storm! Storm!" I shouted wildly.

A gun exploding almost in my very face was my answer. Then it all went blacker than black for me.

After a while, a long while after, I learned later, I felt hands on my face, felt a soft body pillowing my head. I opened my eyes, looked up at Tilly. Her lips barely formed the words, "Stay out, stay out!" And they were excited words. But I managed to look through my lashes.

The cabin was torn to the devil, all littered up. Jerry Staffel was pulling my bunk to pieces, swearing all the while, and standing smoking and grinning over against the door, was Storm! Somehow she looked older now, she looked harder, and meaner.

Jerry turned from the bunk. "It's not here," he snarled. And, "You, you damned squaw, you've been here all the while. What'd the fool do with that contract? To hell with the check, I can stop payment on that, but I got to have the contract."

Tilly said, "I haven't seen it."

"Search her," snarled Storm, and waved the gun. Tilly laid my head down, and again without moving her lips whispered, "Lay quiet, Effie, quiet!"

SHE stood straight and stiff before Storm. Jerry watched, grinning. Storm's fingers licked out and hooked in the man's shirt that Tilly was wearing. Buttons gave, she jerked Tilly about until the shirt was in her hands. A white woman would have been ashamed standing there like that before a fellow like Jerry. But Tilly wasn't.

She glared at Storm, her arms at her side, her bronze breasts quivering with suppressed rage, reflecting the light. "Give me a knife," snarled Storm, and when Jerry gave her a knife she slashed at Tilly until the skirt fell in tatters, slashed heedlessly, sometimes leaving long red scratches of maroon on the soft bronze flesh of her thighs and hips.

It was more than I could stand. I sat up. Storm wheeled on me. "Ah, baby boy comes to life," she sneered.

Sitting up was as far as I got. I was too weak to do anything else, weak from the bullet wound that creased my scalp. Did you ever look in the eyes of a female devil? Storm Kilday dropped to one knee beside me, and she grabbed my hair in her left hand, bowed me back across her knee and put the knife at my throat.

"Talk, damn you," she grated. "Where's that contract?"

Funny how a fellow's mind works when he looks at death? I was still in a bewildered fog, her trapping me like that. But somehow I wasn't really mad at her; after all my friend, Tumbleweed Terry, had killed her brother. A man does foolish things in moments like this.

I said, "Honest, Storm honey, I didn't know Tom was going to kill your brother."

"Brother," she snarled. "You damned fool, Jack Kilday was my husband! Now talk, before I give you the knife. Where's that paper?"

Sure, I saw it all then. There with the knife point cutting into my skin, Tilly standing half nude

IF you want to get the MOST out of married life, you owe it to YOURSELF and the one you love, to learn the TRUTH about SEX now, before it is too late!

Accept this Gift

WITH YOUR PURCHASE OF "SEX PRACTICE IN MARRIAGE"

So many married people THINK they know it all, but they are really FEARFULLY IGNORANT about Sex Practice in Marriage. Do not be one of those whose marriage is ruined by Sex Mistakes!

SEX IGNORANCE LEADS TO TROUBLE
SEX KNOWLEDGE BRINGS HAPPINESS

Unless people LEARN HOW to make sexual intercourse harmonious and happy, a great deal of trouble usually follows. Very often the wife is not sexually AWAKENED. As a result, she DISLIKES sexual intercourse—the husband may become SEXUALLY STARVED—the wife becomes nervous, her health suffers.

MANY MEN ARE APT TO BLUNDER and then accuse their WIVES of "frigidity." Dr. Evans shows HOW to overcome this common condition. He tells husband and wife the secret of adjusting sexually to each other.

He reveals how to make Sexual Union A SOURCE OF NEW POWER and inspiration that brightens and strengthens every phase of married life.

Use your sex power as Dr. Evans shows, AND IT WILL HELP YOU tackle your every day problems with MORE SUCCESS than you ever DREAMED possible!

Take advantage of this **money-saving offer today! RETURN the COUPON NOW!**

SEX and the LOVE IMPULSE

(Part of Contents)

The Arts of Love, Stroking, Petting, Caressing, Choosing Your Ideal Mate. Courtship and Mating. The Wedding Night . First Entry. Advice to Bride and Groom. Physical Union and Spiritual Bliss. Approach and Withdrawal. How to Adjust Happily to Mate. Mutual Sex Satisfaction. Sex Harmony. Sex Organs, Male, Female. Sexual Response. Centers of Sex Excitement. Homosexuals.

"Facts of sexual development . . . Sound mental hygiene." — Quarterly Review of Biology.

SEX PRACTICE IN MARRIAGE

(Part of Contents)

Bride and Groom
- Sexual Overtures
- First Sexual Contact
- Frequency of Sexual Relations
- The Sexual Cycle
- Sexual Response and "Timing" in Men and Women
- Woman's Hygiene

The Cold Wife—Frigidity
- Mental, Psychic and Physical Barriers
- Effects of Menstruation
- Effects of Physical Development
- Effects of Early Parental Training
- The Clumsy Husband
- False Frigidity
- "Faking" Pseudo-Response
- Sexual Underdevelopment
- The Pleasure Part of Sex

The Unsatisfied Wife
- Effect Upon Nerves
- Fear of Pregnancy
- The Acquiescent Wife
- True and False Sexual Response
- Happily Managing the Sex Act
- Problems of Orgasm
- Satisfying of Normal Sexual Appetite
- The Oversexed Wife

Married Courtship
- Making Desires Known via the Special Language of Sex
- Tactics the Husband Should Use
- Tactics the Wife Should Use
- Helpful Beginnings to Sexual Union
- Sensual Appeal; Spiritual Appeal
- Secondary Sexual Centers

The Perfect Physical Expression of Love
- Positions in Intercourse; Factors in Determining Choice
- Two Types of Orgasm in Women
- Producing Climax Together
- Mechanical Side of Sex Union
- Sexual Stimulation; Sexual Adjustment

THE CHARTS

Female Sex Organs, Side View ● The Internal Sex Organs ● The External Sex Organs ● Female Sex Organs, Front View ● Entrance to Female Genital Parts ● Male Sex Organs, Side View ● Male Sex Organs, Front View ● Male Reproductive Cell, Front and Side Views. (Detailed Explanations Accompany Charts.)

"GIVES all the advice that anybody needs."
—Journal of American Medical Association.

SEND NO MONEY

GIVEN FREE WITH PURCHASE

Mail This Coupon Now to
Healthcraft, Inc., Dept. 848-A,
247 West 19th St., New York, N. Y.

Mail me my Bonus copy of **Sex and the Love Impulse.** Also send for 5 days' reading a copy of **SEX PRACTICE IN MARRIAGE.** When both books arrive (in plain package marked Personal), I will pay postman only $1.95 and a few cents delivery charge. (This is the regular published price of Sex Practice in Marriage ALONE.) If not entirely satisfied, I may return purchase within five days for FULL REFUND of purchase price. (I am over 21 years old.)

Name .....

Address .....

City and State.....

☐ CHECK HERE if you wish to enclose only $1.95 with this coupon, thus saving delivery charge. (Same money-back guarantee, of course.) We reserve the right to refund money or reject orders if supply is exhausted.

and defenseless in the arms of Jerry Staffel! I saw! This woman had been part of it all, now she was out in the open. She'd led me on constantly so she could learn my plans! No wonder the Staffels knew whatever I planned to do, when I mailed a letter, when I went to Canton. She'd filled me full of lies about Tumbleweed while she was in my arms, while I was drunk on rotten whiskey and rottener emotions! Given me a gun to kill the man she hated. Just *using* me!

I said, "Go on, push the knife. To hell with you." And I didn't care.

"I've got it, let him alone," said Tilly, with a sort of sob. And she had it, too, tucked in a chink in the wall they'd never have found.

AFTER a while we were all alone, just Tilly and I. She was lying on the bunk, tied hand and foot, only the movement of her breasts denoting life. That and the tears on her cheeks. I was on the floor, bound in the same manner.

Then she was up on her elbow, rolling off the bunk with a thud, soft flesh quivering and swaying, bruising cruelly. Over and over she rolled on the floor toward me. Then she was soft and warm against me, her lips at my ear. "We've got to get out," she said loudly, "out, do you hear. They've set the cabin on fire."

You could smell the flame and smoke then, and overhead a little jet of blue smoke shot into the cabin. I'd built it of seasoned logs. It'd burn all right, no matter how much snow was on it.

She pulled her slim body down my chest, made me turn over and started chewing at my wrists. She'd slip every once in a while and I knew her teeth were bringing blood. I didn't care. The flames grew and the smoke got thicker and we both would cough every few seconds. There wasn't any use, she wasn't making any headway. I remember muttering, "Tilly, Tilly, you squaw, you, come here, come here."

And an inch at a time she dragged her bruised body over the floor. Now we were face to face, breast to breast. I choked a few times on it, but I got it out. I told her I loved her. I told her how mistaken I'd been, what a poor blind fool I was. Once, while I was telling her, it seemed like we heard shots off in the distance, but maybe it was just the crackle of the flames.

She whispered, "I'm not afraid, Eph, I'm not afraid," and her sweet warm lips were on mine.

There, body to body, mouth to mouth, we lay. If this was death, I thought, it wasn't so bad, not nearly as bad as it had been pictured.

Then the door bust open and a blanketed figure, a man covered from head to foot in blankets, stumbled through the murk. There was a hand in my shirt, and I felt my body skidding over the warping boards—then for the second time I lost consciousness!

ALL my life, whenever I do pass out, I hope I wake up in the same place I'd found myself twice that night. In Tilly's arms. I sat up, quick, and she had a bandage around my head, and was washing

(Continued on page 106)

Wild Wagon Wheels

(Continued from page 29)

Duval would be alone in that rear room counting up the day's dinero from the bar and the games. He was convinced they knew where Wolf Callow's hideout lay in the badlands.

The window showed a space of glass beside the shade. Slim cat-footed toward it. Then he was swearing bitterly to himself.

Diamond Reagan was there, also Pinky Duval. So was Wolf Callow, and Slim breathed a little easier over that. But he counted nine other gunnies, four of whom he guessed to be Wolf Callow's outlaws who had come with him.

Three games of poker were being played. And table stakes were some of the bar gold looted from freight wagons when Owner, Hopkins, and Dad Dorn had been murdered.

Slim was cursing his own helplessness against such odds. One hombre with one gun against twelve, most of whom wore a pair of .45s. It was hopeless. He might gun down two or even more, but he was not so sure of even that. It would bring him no nearer to what he sought, to knowledge of the place where Mary had been taken.

Slim's brain never worked faster. He could not count on any of the weak-spined Stubtown folks. Shorty Masters was up in Big Basin. Slim was thinking hard when his gaze went up to the white canvas top of the big freight wagon on the trail above.

A Husband's Confession

IT'S BEEN YEARS since Mary and I have been so thrillingly happy together. And it all came about this way . . . I saw an ad the other day on Weak Manhood and Rejuvenation. I read the ad carefully down to the last word.

You see, I've been worried about glandular weakness for a long time. I've bought pills, tablets, powders—but nothing seemed to do. I kept feeling worse and worse. Then Mary started growing irritable and cross . . . Our marriage was on the rocks.

Then one day I saw this ad on Men Past Forty. I answered it the same day. Then things happened. It opened my eyes to my terrible blunders. Showed me what a fool I had been for years. I stopped my mistakes at once. Soon Mary began to change towards me. She grew more sympathetic, more loving. In a short while we were old sweethearts again. And today, we are happier than we've ever been since our honeymoon. . . .

How to Help Yourself

Are you worried about prostate trouble or weak manhood? Then you, too, may help yourself in the privacy of your home. Thousands of married men are learning, for the first time in their lives, how to treat their impaired vigor and prostate gland disorders by medically-approved methods. Now let A. F. Niemoeller, A.B., M.A., B.S., also help you prevent unnecessary pain or worry and increase your marriage efficiency. His directions are so simple, you'll be delighted by them.

Increase Marriage Efficiency

This advice on rejuvenation, gland weakness and methods of control is all yours—by sending at once for the great, illustrated book, MEN PAST 40. The home treatments indicated in it are yours for lifetime use and lifetime help. No wonder it is hailed by Doctors, acclaimed by Readers, and highly recommended by leading Medical Journals. For it tells you what to do and avoid about gland products, vacuum pumps and electric apparatus in treating impaired vigor. And it tells you also how to use practical home diets, baths and drugs in combatting Prostatitis and resulting Night Rising, Crotch and Back Pains, etc. Now you learn about them easily, of massage, mechanical devices and external applications, and also about the latest self-help methods and simple home measures.

Leading Medical Journals Say:

Medical Record: Everything is here. **Illinois Medical Journal:** Up to date. **Iowa Medical Journal:** Simple & clear. **National Medical Assn. Journal:** Methods & Remedies. **Southern Medical Journal:** Sound advice. **Medical World.** For every man of middle-age or over. **Journal of Surgery, Obstetrics and Gynecology:** Pictures are excellent. **Alabama Medical Journal:** Great deal of valuable information. **Medical Digest:** Readers will be greatly benefited. **Rhode Island Medical Journal:** Admirable & complete. **Virginia Medical Monthly:** A great book.

OUR OFFER--SEND NO MONEY

Don't let your married happiness be spoiled by lack of knowledge. If you are concerned about your decreased potency, or wish to regain your fullest virility, send at once for this great, illustrated work—the most widely praised book of its kind in America. Simplified drawings, anatomical diagrams, picture charts. Guaranteed harmless. SEND NO MONEY. Just pay postman $1.98 plus postage on arrival. Shipped in plain wrapper. Overwhelming approval guaranteed or money back. Enjoy married life again. MAIL THIS COUPON NOW!

HARVEST HOUSE, Dept. H-15,
2 West 13th St., New York.
Send MEN PAST FORTY in plain wrapper. On delivery I will pay postman $1.98 plus few cents postage. If not satisfied I may return it within ten days and my $1.98 will be refunded.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

☐ CHECK HERE if you want to save postage. Enclose $1.98 with coupon and we ship prepaid.

Ten minutes later, Slim had reached the wagon again.

In another ten minutes he had backed the wagon to a sloping spot where its rear wheels rested on the edge of the bluff directly above the roof of the Black Jack saloon. Slim set the brake hard enough to hold, then got the wooden block he used for chunking the wheels sometimes to rest his mules on steep grades.

He placed the chunk solidly behind one wheel, then he brought four lass ropes he had in the wagon and tied them together. Looping one end around the chunk, he dropped the other, making sure that it reached the ground close beside the Black Jack.

He unhitched the mules and tied them up. Then he carefully freed the set brake. The weight of the wagon rested upon the blocking chunk.

Slim talked to himself in clipped words.

"It'll smash the hell an' all outta most of them varmints, but it's bound to leave one or two kickin' long enough to talk—"

Minutes later he was again creeping toward the saloon window. He held the end of the lass rope.

SLIM McCANN never had gone in for killing. He wasn't a gunnie. He was a freight skinner, but at this moment he was filled with an almost insane desire to avenge the murdered freighters and wipe out the heads of the owlhooters who had taken Mary Dorn.

God only knew what had happened to Mary, even if Wolf Callow had not returned to his camp to attend to her personal.

Slim crept close and peered through the window. Only one man had left the backroom. Diamond Reagan was nowhere to be seen. It was too late to worry about that now. He might still be in the building.

"An' if he ain't I'll get him individual afterward!" he promised himself.

By this time Slim's strength had almost petered out. His face wound had bled a great deal and his head bore a bump the size of an egg. He could feel the haze in his brain that had preceded his second attack of unconsciousness. So he moved to put all of his weight on the rope attached to the block chunking the freight wagon two hundred feet above.

As he did, he saw Pinky Duval nod to Wolf Callow and grin. Wolf's ugly face matched the grin with one of his own that had nothing but evil in it, if Slim had been clear headed enough to grasp their meaning. They were looking toward a door at one side of the back room.

"Grin, damn yuh!" said Slim hoarsely, and threw all of his strength onto the rope.

He felt the give of the rope when the chunk pulled loose from under the wagon wheel. The chunk itself came hurtling down. The big white-topped wagon moved more slowly, rolling back, beginning to topple.

And just before its two tons of weight with the load plunged into space, a scream of desperate appeal rang out inside the saloon. Slim's heart chilled and although

in five seconds he believed the back room of the Black Jack would be a shambles, he dived toward the window.

"No! No! Not that! For God's sake—"

The door of the side room had burst open. Mary Dorn, her sweet, slim young body stripped of her outer clothing, darted into the back room, her breasts dancing, her legs flashing white with each frantic stride. And over her shoulder appeared the dark face of Diamond Reagan.

The gambler's teeth were bared as if he were some animal. His gripping hand yanked the nearly nude girl back into the side room. A hand clamped over her mouth. Pinky Duval and the owlhooters of Wolf Callow laughed raucously, their thick lips working.

The wheel block smashed first onto the sheet iron roof of the Black Jack with a ringing bounce. The crash brought Pinky Duval and Wolf Callow to their feet.

"What the hell an' all was that?" shouted Wolf.

Slim, powerless to move, his spine turned to water, saw the big freight wagon turn completely over once in the seconds it took to fall two hundred feet.

"God help 'er!" he groaned in bitter despair.

THE wagon struck the flimsy building with its sheet iron roof with all the force of exploding dynamite. Roof and walls crumpled inward, and upon the dying of the terrific crash came the screams of dying men. The full weight of the wagon had obliterated the back

HE WON!
THE GIRL OF HIS DREAMS.
DICK'S AN AWFULLY NICE FELLOW-
BUT HE HAS SUCH AN OLD LOOKING FIGURE. MOTHER SAYS I SHOULD GO WITH YOUNGER LOOKING MEN
MARY WONT GO OUT WITH ME ANY MORE. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS WRONG, BOB?
DICK, GET RID OF THAT MIDDLE-AGE BULGE. THEN TRY AGAIN
DICK GOT A MANLY-FORM LATER
HELLO, MARY!
WHY DICK, YOU LOOK SO DIFFERENT! DID YOU GROW YOUNGER?
MR. AND MRS.
LOOK YOUNG! FEEL YOUNG!
Youthful Appearance Wins!
Don't let a sagging, bulging waistline get you down! Thousands of men have found new comfort the "Manly-Form" way. You, too, can guard yourself against "middle-age slouch" and the danger of undue strain. You, too, can win your way to success by looking trim and feeling fit. "Manly-Form" gives invigorating all-day support to flabby fat and muscles. It's a pleasure to wear! Order one today and enjoy at once a snappy youthful appearance—the posture of sparkling health!
HOLD THAT LINE!
WITH The "MANLY FORM" Supporter
FEATURING THE FLAT FRONT
$1.98 POST PAID
SCIENTIFICALLY MADE FOR YOUR COMFORT
"Manly-Form" is scientifically constructed to support your abdomen firmly. Made of 2-way s-t-r-e-t-c-h porous and seamless lastex—lightweight, but amazingly strong. Washing actually preserves its strength. Removable 4-inch steel ribs assure perfect shape—no curling, rolling or bulging. Extra strong 12-strand rubber taping holds belt snugly at waist and thighs. Detachable, air-cooled pouch of fine, soft double yarn —for real masculine support. "Manly-Form" is absolutely undetectable under your clothes. Order one today and feel the difference the minute you put it on! Enjoy the pleasure of looking young and feeling young.
SEND NO MONEY
The amazingly comfortable Flat Front "Manly-Form" can be obtained only from the S. J. Wegman Company. Just fill out and mail the coupon now. By return post you will receive your Flat Front "Manly-Form." Shipped in plain package. Pay on delivery. Satisfaction guaranteed.
S. J. WEGMAN COMPANY Dept. 120
70 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.
Send me at once a "MANLY-FORM" supporter. I will pay postman $1.98, plus postage. My waist measure is.....
Name.....
Address.....
City..... State.....
☐ We will stand postage charges if you enclose $1.98 with this order. Mark this box.
Foreign orders: 10 shillings in advance.

room rendezvous of the Diamond Reagan and Pinky Duval gang of murdering gun men.

The bulge of the wall struck Slim and hurled him from his feet, but he was up again. Up and climbing madly into the building wreckage. If only that side room had been farther away? He could hear two or three pinned down men groaning, and one was screaming.

But of the eleven in that backroom, all of the others had been in the spot where the wagon itself plummeted through. They were as dead as the three freighters murdered in the Devil's Tail.

Splintered planks blocked Slim's way to the side room, and he tore at them until his fingers were bleeding, but he at first could hear no sign. It was coming daylight now and there was faint gray light replacing the smashed oil lamps.

He saw her at last, the whiteness of her lovely body standing out against the splintered black and brown boards. She was on her knees, painfully extricating herself from a tangle of planks that had been upheld by a cross beam.

Slim called out, "Mary! Mary!"

Her voice replied with awed calmness.

"Slim McCann! You're alive?"

He did not see Diamond Reagan. There was that in Mary's voice as she spoke that sent him toward her. But she suddenly cried out, "Slim! Look out! Behind you!"

Slim got only half turned before slender, strong fingers clamped his throat.

"You think you've won, but you won't live to brag about it," said the deadly quiet voice of Diamond Reagan. "They'll find you here with the others."

Slim's weakness was still upon him. He lashed out with a fist, but the blow glanced harmlessly from Reagan's jaw. The gambler gave a short, hard laugh and Slim's gullet constricted until blinding pain shot in his head.

Mary was trying to reach them, catching up a piece of broken board as a weapon. It was no time for ethics. Slim put all of his remaining strength into the driving of one knee upward.

Reagan's fingers relaxed and a groan was forced from him.

"Why, damn you—"

Slim saw the fingers that left his throat dive for that deadly .38 in Reagan's shoulder holster. He managed to throw himself forward, to fasten upon Reagan's wrist just as the gun was coming out.

The hammer must have caught, for there was a quick explosion. Reagan's breath hissed into Slim's face. His eyes held a look of surprise, and almost as quickly they held no expression whatever.

A bullet from his own gun had punctured his heart.

Slim felt his knees giving away. But once more he fought to keep his strength. For Mary's cool white arms were around him. She seemed to forget completely that she was wearing only her scant white undies.

Her lips were sweet upon Slim's dry, burning mouth. She was straining him close to her soft breast. In the midst of all that shambles, there was a promise in that kiss that would have brought life to a dead man.

Hat Rack Crosses The River

(Continued from page 41)

LATE that night, when Pilar returned from the Cantina of the Golden Heart, Single Shot was waiting. In the gloom he could barely see her, but the rustle of her skirt was music, and the momentary pressure of her body reminded him that there are more reasons for living than for dying.

"Go up to the roof. I'll join you in a moment."

He ascended the steep stairs. The moon was high, and for a moment he wondered if this was some trick to have him picked off by a sniper. He shrugged, seated himself on the rug spread in a corner of the parapet. Suspicion came lightly, left lightly, for nothing mattered.

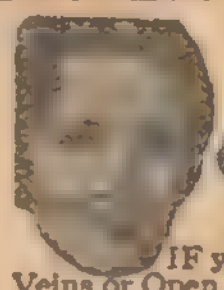
Nothing, that is, until Pilar emerged from the hatchway. Her robe of Chinese silk gleamed in the moon, and so did her sleek black hair. The garment trailed from her and in the silver enchantment of the night, Single Shot could not tell what she wore beneath it; except that it was hardly enough to count. Every curve was boldly modeled by the evening breeze that drew her slip against her skin.

She sank back against the parapet, and whispered, "This is high enough for you to see the road that we will take." She gestured

Curved, "shock-proof" GOLD PLATE FRONT watch with all the color and charm of natural yellow gold. Stainless back. Accurate. GUARANTEE by a famous $1,000,000 FACTORY enclosed. Watch is yours FREE of extra charge with every ring ordered NOW and paid for within one year on our new easy two $2 payment plan. (Total only $4.) Remember . . . . the cost of the watch is included in the price of the ring . . . . You Pay Nothing Extra for the watch! No Charge for Credit . . . . We trust you! No red tape. We'll ship at once. TEN DAY FREE TRIAL. Mail Postcard or Coupon NOW. Send No Money with order! Your package comes by RETURN MAIL.

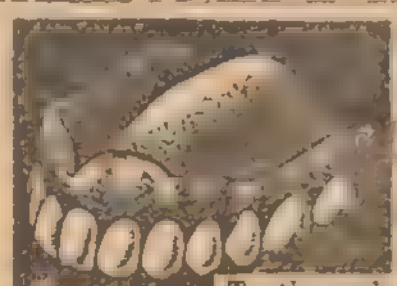
GLADIATOR RING Double Head Set in Lifetime Sterling Silver Decorated in rich 1/30 14K Gold.

GOLD STANDARD WATCH CO., Dept. X705
Newton, MASS. RUSH OFFER
☐ Lady's Model ☐ Man's Model
NAME.....
ADDRESS .....



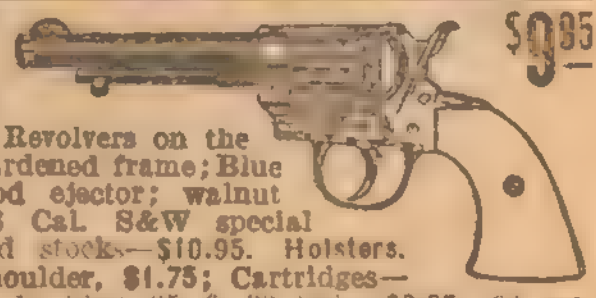
Suffer Varicose LEG SORES?

IF you suffer pain and misery of Varicose Ulcers, Veins or Open Leg Sores, send away at once for FREE Booklet "THE LIEPE METHODS FOR HOME USE." Tells all about this 40-year-old method, praised and endorsed by thousands. Liepe Methods, Dept. G-45, 3284 N. Green Bay Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



FALSE TEETH
FIRM-FIT Dental Plates
Made in Our Own Laboratory!
AS LOW AS $6.75
Should fit perfectly. Workmanship and material Guaranteed. Teeth made from your personal impression, look beautiful. Wear plates 60 days if not delighted with fit and your improved appearance the trial costs nothing. Money Back guarantee.
SEND NO MONEY Rush postcard for FREE Impression material and catalog of LOW PRICES. Do it right now!
$6.75 60 DAYS TRIAL
SUPERVISED BY A DENTIST
FERRIS-GRIGSBY DENTAL LAB., INC.
Dept. 364 G217 S. HALSTED ST. CHICAGO, ILL.

"TEXAS RANGER" $9.95
6-Shot Double Action



One of the most popular Revolvers on the market. Heavy solid case-hardened frame; Blue steel 5½" barrel; side rod ejector; walnut stocks. Chambered for 38 Cal. S&W special cts.—$9.95. White ivoroid stocks—$10.95. Holsters, open, 95c; Flap, $1.25; Shoulder, $1.75; Cartridges—$1.50 per 50. Automatics; 10 Shot 25 & 32 Cal.—$8.95; 32 cal. 8 shot—$7.95. Holsters, 75c. $2 Deposit required on C.O.D.'s—Give Age, Occupation and References. *Bargain Catalog: S&W, Colts, Rifles, Holsters, Air Guns, Telescopes, Cameras, Binoculars, etc. Send 3c Stamp.*

LEE SALES CO. (Dept. FX), 35 West 32nd St., N. Y. City

north, toward the Rio Grande. "One goes in, but not out, that way. And you know what is to the south."

He nodded. There was *malpais,* blistering desert; water holes known only to cattle thieves, and to outlaws seeking refuge from the *rurales.*

"Then another way, first west, and then north, roundabout. The trail is too dangerous for any of the outlaws who guard Los Jacales. One dash past the first watchers, and then we fight only thirst—"

"When do we go, *chiquita?*"

"The next fiesta, when most of this crew will be dead drunk at the *cantina.* I will dance. I will slip out. And we will ride."

She knew that he realized the risk, and did not care. Her eyes brightened, and she leaned closer. "Tell me about yourself, mad man! What makes you so willing to die for a woman who cares not a snap for you? Who promises you what you may not live to claim?"

It made no difference that she might betray him. He laughed at the risk, and he told her; everything, from the start. He concluded, "What I stole from my friend is more than you can give me. I do this for Hat Rack, not for you."

She frowned a little, then brightened. "I should be angry with one who is so indifferent." She pressed closer, until her mouth was against his. "Kiss me now . . . and you will have less regret when we two are shot from our saddles, somewhere along the trail . . . they guard the secrets of this town."

Later, when the moon was very low, Pilar stirred in his arms, and yawned sleepily. "Your horse undoubtedly has been stolen," she said. "But everyone won't know that. Only the thief. The others will think you rode away. So you will stay here, day and night."

During the days before the fiesta came, Single Shot and Pilar spent their afternoons in the small patio, whose further end was formed by the empty stables. They were lazy, those forenoons and afternoons; languorous and a little incredible. Sometimes Gaspar did talk his way into the house, but he never stayed long.

"If it were not what we faced," she would say, "I might love you, *Tejano mío!* But you love death too well."

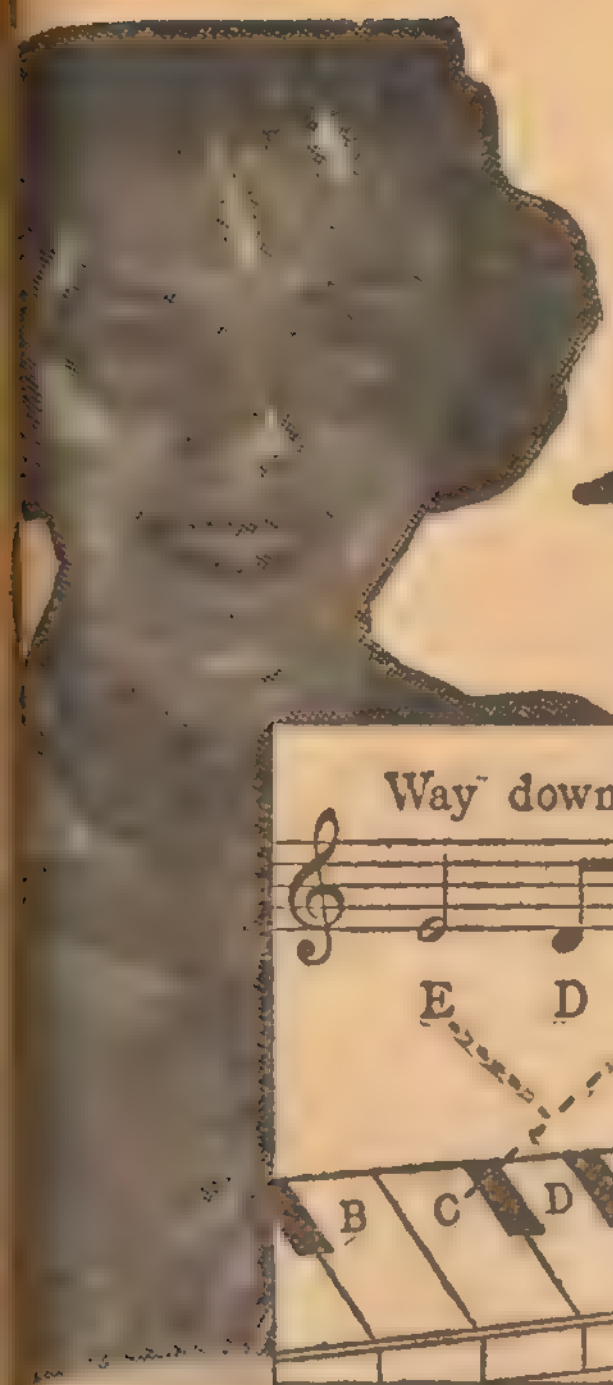
"If the fiesta don't hurry up," he said, "I'll not be so crazy about leaving. Or I might kick the lid off of hell and come out a-boiling. To stake a claim to you. For keeps."

Pilar had given him the will to live, and she knew it.

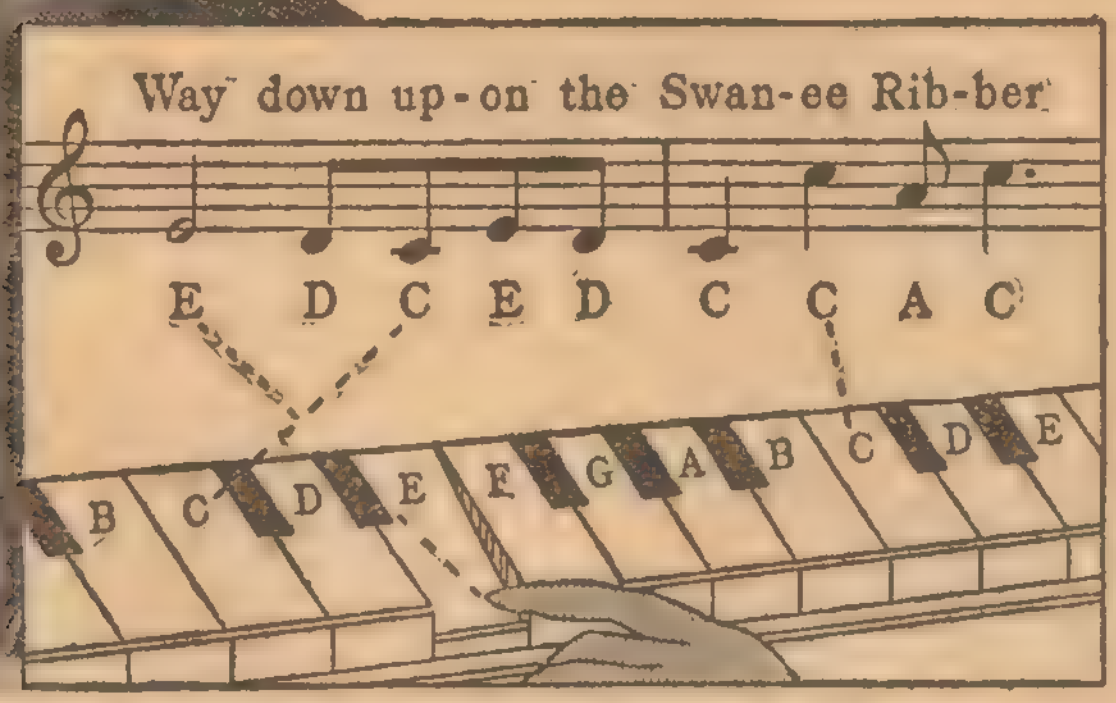
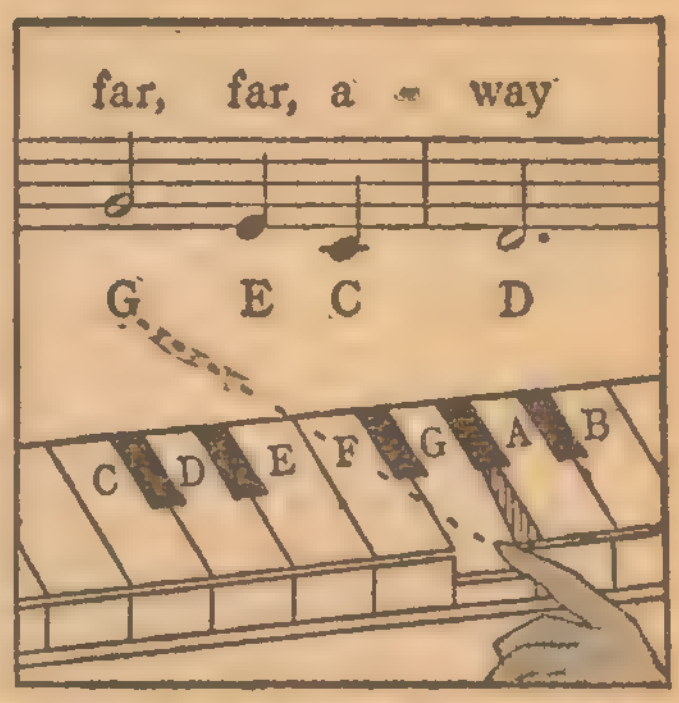
Then, the day before the fiesta, he glanced out through the bars, and stared so long that Pilar came to his side. She noticed the tenseness of his posture, and his grip on the iron bars.

HAT RACK SMITH was riding down the street! Single Shot cursed. Pilar saw the lean, tall man who slumped in the saddle. She guessed his identity from Single Shot's reaction.

"Your friend, no?"



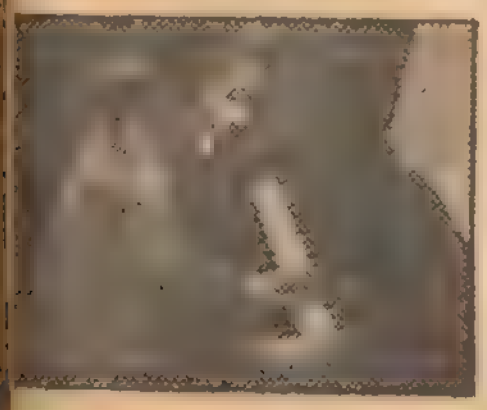
YOU CAN PLAY THE MELODY OF "SWANEE RIVER" RIGHT NOW—*HERE'S HOW*



Thousands Now Play Who Never Thought They Could

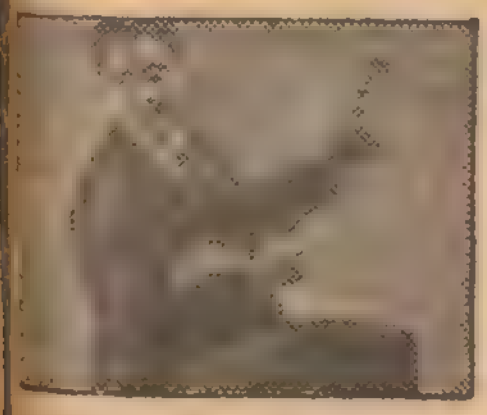
Surprised Friends

I want to say that my friends are greatly surprised at the different pieces I can already play. I am very happy to have chosen your method of learning.
*B. F., Bronx, N. Y.



Learned Quickly at Home

I didn't dream I could actually learn to play without a teacher. Now when I play for people they hardly believe that I learned to play so well in so short a time.
*H. C. S., Calif.



Best Method by Far

Enclosed is my last examination sheet for my course in Tenor Banjo. This completes my course. I have taken lessons before under teachers, but my instructions with you were by far the best.
*A. O., Minn.

*Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures by professional models.

SEE HOW EASY IT IS!

Look at the diagram above. The first note is "E." That's the white key to the right of the two black keys near the middle of the piano keyboard. The next note "D," one note lower, is the next white key to the left and, similarly, the next note, "C," is the next white key to the left of that one. The following three notes are simply a repetition of the first three and there you are, actually playing the familiar melody of "Swanee River."

That's the modern way to learn music: you learn to play by *playing*. No tedious study and practice. This shortcut method starts you on a real tune in your very first lesson. After a few weeks, you'll be able to read the notes off like a regular musician. Soon you are able to play scores of familiar favorites and new hits at sight. And that applies to any instrument: violin, guitar, accordion, saxophone, whichever you want to learn. It takes only a few minutes a day, costs only a few cents a day.

Here's Free Proof--

You just can't realize how easy it is to learn music by this wonderful method until you send for the free demonstration lesson that shows how it actually works. No cost, no obligation in sending for the demonstration lesson. You'll also receive a fascinating illustrated booklet that explains everything. See for yourself why over 700,000 people all over the world have taken up music this easy way. Just mail the coupon—today. (Note: Instruments supplied when desired, cash or credit.) Address U. S. School of Music, 1866 Brunswick Bldg., New York, N. Y.

Established 1898—Our Forty-first Year

SEND FOR FREE DEMONSTRATION LESSON

U. S. School of Music, 1866 Brunswick Bldg., New York, N. Y.

Without cost or obligation to me, please send me your free illustrated Booklet and Demonstration Lesson, showing how I can learn at home to play the instrument checked below. (Do you have instrument?.....)

Piano	Saxophone	Mandolin	Clarinet	Ukulele
Violin	Cello	Trombone	Flute	Organ
Guitar	Hawaiian Guitar	Cornet	Piccolo	Modern Elementary Harmony
Piano Accordion		Trumpet	Drums and Traps	
Plain Accordion	Banjo	Harp		Voice Culture

Name.....

Address.....

Town.....State.....

"Yes. He ain't stopping. He's heading south."

Pilar's lovely face became weary and it seemed that she had aged. Her shoulders sagged. Finally she said, "He has come to help you on your fool's vengeance, and you can't let him ride on alone?"

"Pilar, I won't lie to you. That's it."

Single Shot overtook Hat Rack at his first camp. He kept his hands raised until they were face to face. On recognition, Hat Rack lowered his carbine. Single Shot said, "I seen you, and I followed. I fell down on the job, back there."

Hat Rack nodded. "Don't blame you. When Sabina told me, I took her home and rid hell bent to keep you from sich damn' foolishness. We cut up like fool kids, that night, you and me. I been learning things. I know for sure Morgan was behind me getting bushwhacked. I know Morgan works with the thieves of Los Jacales. An' I'm jest as sure Morgan's passed through Los Jacales to dicker with his pardners, further south."

"That makes it our business," said Single Shot. "Not jest yourn."

That night, Single Shot's words were proved by the event. A rifle blazed out of the gloom. A horse screamed, and dropped in a heap. The other broke his hobbles and ran across the desert. Then Hat Rack got his Winchester into action.

Single Shot faced the other way. The two carbines coughed lead at the men who had surrounded the camp. By sheer volume of fire, they hoped to blast the two out of their shelter. Hat Rack laughed as a far off yell furnished the echo for his shot. He had fired at a flash and made it.

Single Shot said, "They know who we are. That's why they're stampeding the horses and ringing us in to starve us out.

For the first time in many days, Single Shot was carefree. He knew that he had won a full pardon.

Day broke over the siege. Hell seized the desert. In this dry camp, they were doomed. Sand and rocks kicked up by wild shots peppered Single Shot and his partner. They held their fire, waiting for a sure mark. Finally Hat Rack's carbine blazed. A man lurched from cover, and slowly slid down the slope.

"Chalk up another," croaked Single Shot, worming away as three closely placed slugs proved that someone had gotten a new angle of fire. "Gosh, I wisht I had a drink!"

There was water in each canteen, but they were nursing it along. Noon came, and Hat Rack said, "Time for another swaller. I'll dig 'em up."

His stealthy motion drew fire. Single Shot's carbine smacked, just once. A man pitched from a clump of mesquite. Hat Rack heard the cry, and risked a glance.

A slug ripped the canteen. The glancing impact tore out part of the side. It flew from his grasp. Before he could retrieve it, little water remained.

"That was better'n killin' me!"

That night, they knew that they had to risk it on foot. "Over thataway," said Single Shot. "That's where the wust shots is dug in."

"It's their hosses that counts," Hat Rack corrected.

So they advanced toward the *remuda.*

IT NEVER occurred to the iron ring that two men, half perishing of thirst, would have enough energy to try it. Vultures had been circling that day; they rarely missed when they predicted death in the desert.

Perhaps a rolling pebble betrayed the two who crept across the darkened waste. Perhaps some watcher was warned by the intuition of a man long under tension. There was a warning yell.

Single Shot leaped up, carbine at his hip. Hat Rack's long legs reached out. Pistols crackled before the charge was twenty yards long.

Hat Rack stumbled, measured his length. His partner caught up. "Get along, you fool!" the tall man growled, but Single Shot jerked him to his feet.

It ended in a blaze of six guns. That leveled the odds. All along the circle men were still turning out of their blankets. They were too far off to get into the game in time. Those who faced the two gunners broke and ran; though many of them lay kicking on the sand.

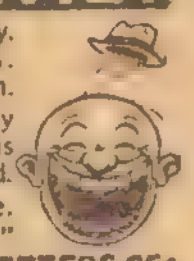
"We made it—" Hat Rack lurched forward, coughing.

A horseman charged up. Single Shot whirled. A shot beside him nearly split his head. "Git that hoss!" Hat Rack croaked from the ground.

Single Shot bounded forward as the panic stricken beast reared up, dumping its dead rider to the

FUN KNOCKOUT!
KID YOUR FRIENDS
FOOL YOUR SWEETIE!

★ Make them think you are traveling in New York City. Lots of the Most Marvelous Fun for Practical Jokers. Tell them you are making WHOOPEE in the big town. We send you 10 Post Card Views of New York City for 25 cents. You address them and return them to us in an envelope, saying what date you want them mailed. Start the fun today — and how much fun you will have. "WHOOPEE! WHOOPEE! ! WHOOPEE! ! !"



LETTERS ALSO MAILED, 10c EACH, or 4 LETTERS 25c
CUT OUT THIS ADVERTISEMENT AND PASTE IT IN YOUR DIARY
OCCULT CO. BOX 59 DEPT. C-8 WHITESTONE, N.Y.

BARGAINS!!!
Used Home-Study Courses
BOUGHT-SOLD-RENTED

72-PAGE ILLUSTRATED CATALOG FREE

Write today for a big FREE illustrated catalog explaining this amazing service. Used correspondence courses and educational books on every subject. 100% satisfaction guaranteed. We buy for cash—we offer unbelievable bargains. Send your name on penny postcard at once! No obligation. NELSON CO., F-224 Manhattan Bldg., Chicago.

GIVEN! ½ CARAT
SIMULATED DIAMOND

To introduce our new 1/30, 14K GOLD decorated, Solid Sterling Silver rings set with brilliant, simulated diamond, we will send you a ½ CARAT UNMOUNTED SIMULATED DIAMOND ABSOLUTELY WITHOUT CHARGE. You and your friends will thrill to its rich beauty! Simply send 3c stamp for postage, package, etc. Only one to a customer.

(MAIL TODAY)
Bradley, Dept. F-705, Newton, Mass.
Here's 3c stamp. Rush my ½ Carat Simulated Diamond.
Name.....
Address.....

LONELY HEARTS

Join old reliable social extension club. Let us help find your happiness, meet nice people. Many have been made happy through our efforts. Why not you? 40 years of dependable, confidential service; Correspondents most everywhere seeking congenial mates, one may be your ideal. Write for photos and descriptions.
STANDARD CLUB, BOX 607-M, GRAYS LAKE, ILL.

PILES Misery Goes
2,000 TEST CASES PROVE IT

Startling as it may seem, Only One 10-Minute Treatment was required in the majority of cases. TRY IT AT MY RISK. No Salves, Suppositories, Pills or Operation. Actual facts. Proof and testimony from prominent people in my community to PROVE these claims sent FREE to you. Write to

FREE PROOF

O. E. Hensperger, 100 W. Chicago Av., Dept. A-22, Chicago

NEED MONEY?
WOMEN WHO CAN DO SIMPLE SEWING

Can earn money at home making Aprons. We buy the Finished Aprons. Send 15c to cover Mailing of Samples and Details. FASHION FABRICS CO., 611 Broadway, Dept. CF-7, New York.

FOREST JOBS

available at $125-$175 per month, steady. Cabin. Hunt, trap, patrol. Qualify at once.
Get details immediately
Rayson Service Bureau, D-51, Denver, Colo.

Racing System

Those who play the races cannot afford to be without our FREE BOOKLET, "How To Win." It is astounding the racing world. Send for it. No obligation. NO TIPS.
PATY PUBLISHING CO.
618 So. Western Ave., Dept. 231, Los Angeles

ground. He caught the reins, pulled the beast to its feet.

Hat Rack stumbled to his knees. Single Shot, in the saddle, fought the beast to a halt, then wheeled and reached down. Somehow, he got his lanky partner athwart the saddle. At the end of a quarter of a mile, he overtook one of the stampeded mounts.

With a horse apiece, they had a chance. It would take time to reorganize after a stampede and panic.

Hours later, they reined in their winded mounts.

Hat Rack said, "Why in hell you heading for Los Jacales?"

His face was gray, and his shirt blood soaked. He had stopped a lot of lead. Single Shot said, "There's a gal there. Friend of mine. You kain't ride much further. But if we git there afore daylight, and ahead of the skunks behind us, there's a chanct of hiding out until you can ride."

"Ain't no use, Single Shot," coughed Hat Rack. "I stopped the right pill in the wrong place. You're crazy, going there. There's a better way—"

"Shut up afore I pistol whip you," Single Shot growled. "Yo're going to Los Jacales. I'm running this show."

But before he reached the sleeping town, he feared that Hat Rack was right. During the last miles, he had to brace him in the saddle.

His key admitted him to Pilar's house. In the first gray of dawn, she helped him lift Hat Rack from the horse. They took the wounded rider to her room and gave him a slug of *tequila*.

"Never mind a sawbones," he said. "No Spick can help me, and he'll jest hurt you two, talking." His eyes now centered on Single Shot. "You know who I cut outen the saddle, back there?"

"Who?"

"Morgan. I recognized his voice and hoss. Now listen." Hat Rack's voice became steadier, and he tried to sit up, despite Pilar's efforts. She was in a very thin gown, and the candle light reached through it to suggest every curve of her lovely body. "I was going to axe you —to go back—and take keer of Sabina. But I still kin see with my two eyes, and—"

He gestured, smiled. "Sabina's taken keer of, now that Morgan's dead, and everything else's settled. I found out about how you fixed up your property in her favor."

Pilar shook her head. "No, *señor*," she said, kneeling beside him. "He will help me if he wishes, but he will go where his heart is."

The way she said that made Single Shot wish that he did not love Sabina.

Hat Rack groped until his arm was about Pilar. He drew her head close, and muttered, "Sabina, honey, I guess you was right about me being pig headed and it kilt me . . . but Single Shot'll take keer of you, and I'm glad now he likes you. . . ."

He slumped back. Pilar bent over and kissed his gray lips. Then she turned to Single Shot. "There is only one thing you can do, *querido*. Go back to your woman, and forget me."

"I'm taking you out of here," he said. "And he's going back with us. Acrost the river."

FEMALE BEAUTY ROUND the WORLD

you witness the boldest customs of life and love, and the secret ceremonies of men and women. You are bewildered by ONE THOUSAND LARGE PHOTOGRAPHS, including 130 full-page photos, and thrilled by hundreds of short stories that describe them.

World's Greatest Collection of Strange & Secret Photographs

NOW you can travel round the world with the most daring adventurers. You can see with your own eyes, the weirdest peoples on earth. You witness the strangest customs of the red, white, brown, black and yellow races. You attend their startling rites, their mysterious practices. They are all assembled for you in these five great volumes of the **SECRET MUSEUM OF MANKIND.**

600 LARGE PAGES

Here is the World's Greatest Collection of Strange and Secret Photographs. Here are Exotic Photos from Europe, Harem Photos from Africa, Torture Photos, Female Photos, Marriage Photos from Asia, Oceania, and America, and hundreds of others. There are almost 600 LARGE PAGES OF CAMERA SHOTS, each page 62 square inches in size.

1,000 REVEALING PHOTOS

You see actual love and courtship practiced in every quarter of the world. You see magic and mystery in queer lands where the foot of a white man has rarely trod. You see Oriental modes of love, and female slavery in China, Japan, India, etc. Through the intimacies of the camera,

5 VOLUMES Packed With Pictures

THE SECRET MUSEUM OF MANKIND consists of five picture-packed volumes, (solidly bound together for convenient reading). Dip into any one of these volumes, and as you turn its daring pages, you find it difficult to tear yourself away. Here, in story and uncensored photo, is the WORLD'S GREATEST COLLECTION OF STRANGE AND SECRET PHOTOGRAPHS, containing everything from Female Beauty around the World to the most mysterious Cults and Love Customs. These hundreds and hundreds of large pages will give you days and nights of thrilling instruction.

Contents of 5-Volume Set

Volume 1—The Secret Album of Africa
Volume 2—The Secret Album of Europe
Volume 3—The Secret Album of Asia
Volume 4—The Secret Album of America
Volume 5—The Secret Album of Oceania

Specimen Photos

Various Secret Societies—Civilized Love vs. Savage—Strange Crimes. Criminals—Oriental Modes of Love—Omens, Totems and Taboos—Dress and Undress Round the World—Polygamy of Primitives—Exotic Love Rites

1,000 STRANGE AND SECRET PHOTOS

SEND NO MONEY

Simply sign and mail coupon. Remember, each of the 5 Volumes is 9½ inches high, and opened over a foot wide! Remember also that this 5-Volume Set formerly sold for $10. And it is bound in expensive "life-time" cloth. Don't put this off. Fill out the coupon, drop it in the next mail, and receive this huge work at once.

METRO PUBLICATIONS,
70 5th Ave., Dept. 1507, New York.

Send me "The Secret Museum of Mankind" (5 great volumes bound together). I will pay postman $1.98, plus postage on arrival. If in 5 days I am not delighted, I will return the book and you will refund my $1.98.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

☐ CHECK HERE, if you are enclosing $1.98, thus saving the mailing costs.

Metro Publications, Dept. 1507 70 5th Ave., New York

Gun-Hawk Fire

(Continued from page 53)

you better not give me cause to start shootin'. You see, this is kind of an important day. If that hombre Hilda mentioned, Larry Taylor, don't show up around here by noon, we'll be drove out of here by a buzzard named Kenny."

"That so?" drawled Pecos with seeming carelessness. He glanced at the battered alarm clock on the wall. It said nine o'clock. "Well, you got three hours yet."

"Yeah," said Ericson. He didn't look directly at Pecos. He didn't even seem to be talking to him. "Ben Taylor, who used to own the ranch, was a good friend of mine. Knew him for more'n twenty years. They never did ketch the man who killed him. Should've been easy too. He wasn't shot with no ordinary gun. It was a big bore, probably a stingy-gun or a derringer."

The fragrant odor of coffee began to fill the room, distracting Pecos. He watched Hilda bending over the stove, her lovely face intent. He watched her as he ate the food she set out for him and her father, watched her while she washed up afterwards. It was as if he wished to sear the image of her slim blonde loveliness into his memory, as if he knew he was never to see her again.

Time passed, Ericson telling him how he had first come to the Two Bar B, how his wife was buried on the hill behind the cabin. He let the silent waddy guess what it would do to him to have to leave the place. Then Pecos glanced at the clock and with a start, saw it was a quarter to twelve. In fifteen minutes . . .

HIS eyes swung from Hilda, busy mending a dress, to her father. Ericson's eyes were half closed, the six-gun hanging loosely from his fingers. Slowly Pecos stretched himself, then from that deceptively sleepy position he had thrown himself forward, grabbed the gun from the old man's hand.

"Sorry," he said, "but I got business to attend to."

With an angry cry, Hilda leaped to her feet. Pecos paused in front of her, his eyes looking deep into hers. Then without a word his arms went around her, pressed her close to him. She fought like a wildcat but she couldn't buck his iron grip. He could feel the soft mounds of her bosom crushed against his chest, feel the desperate thrashing of her slim legs. Bending down, he pressed his lips to hers in a burning kiss whose ardor said more than words could ever do.

"Goodbye," he whispered; then he was out of the cabin, running along the creek.

It took him two minutes to get to his horse, saddle up and go thundering toward the Two Bar B. It took him five more to reach it. Four horses were hitched in front of the ranch house. He swung out of the saddle, strode inside. Kenny, Gotch, Blaze, and Hacker were

there. The two former smiled, the two latter scowled at him.

"Well," said Kenny, pushing his big black hat back from his forehead, "I reckon we're all right." He glanced at his watch. "Seven more minutes and this is my spread."

Pecos said nothing but slowly built himself a quirly. Lighting it, he smoked while the others fidgeted. Kenny kept glancing at his watch. Finally,

"Two more minutes," he said. Pecos threw away his butt.

"I guess it's time we got things settled," he drawled.

Kenny looked at him curiously. "You mean, you want the rest of your money?" He shrugged, reaching toward his pocket. "I guess . . ."

"No," said Pecos. "I wanted to give this back," and he tossed the wad of bills that Kenny had given him the day before on the table.

"What?" gaped Kenny. "But Larry Taylor didn't show up. You made good on . . ."

"That's where you're wrong." Slowly Pecos was unbuttoning his shirt. *"I'm Larry Taylor and I'm claiming the Two Bar B!"* There on his bared chest, an American flag was tattooed!

THE four men stood frozen for a moment, then both Blaze and Hacker threw themselves forward into fighting crouches and whipped out their irons. Pecos' draw was smooth perfection. One moment he was standing negligently by the table, the next a hogleg had leaped as if by magic into each of his trigger-wise hands and begun to

WHAT CAUSES EPILEPSY? IS THERE A CURE?

A booklet containing the opinions of famous doctors on this interesting subject will be sent FREE, while they last, to any reader writing to the Educational Division, 535 Fifth Ave., Dept. CP-7, New York, N. Y.

Send for my book on how to develop

STRONG ARMS and BROAD SHOULDERS

for 25c coin or 30c U.S. Stamps

Contains 20 full pages of illustrations showing and fully describing exercises that will quickly develop, beautify and make you gain great strength in your Shoulders, Arms, Wrists, Hands and Fingers.

Without any apparatus this is really a valuable course of exercises.

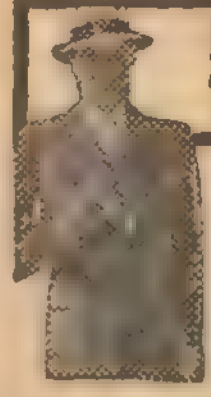
ONLY 25c

ANTHONY BARKER

(doing business at this address for nearly 20 years)

1235 6th Ave., Studio 41, N. Y. City

IF I Send YOU THIS FINE SUIT—



Will You Wear It and Show It to Friends? I need a reliable man in your town to wear a fine, made-to-measure, all-wool DEMONSTRATING SUIT—advertise my famous Union clothing—and take orders. You can make up to $12.00 in a day. My line contains over 150 quality woolens, all sensational values, guaranteed. You need no experience or money. I supply everything required, FREE of extra cost. Write me today for FREE details. H. J. GRAVES, STONEFIELD CORP., 1300 W. Harrison Street, Dept. U-935, Chicago, Illinois.

IF YOU HAVE

GRAY HAIR

and DON'T LIKE a MESSY MIXTURE.... then write today for my

FREE TRIAL BOTTLE

As a Hair Color Specialist with forty years' European American experience, I am proud of my Color Imparter for Grayness. Use it like a hair tonic. Wonderfully GOOD for the scalp and dandruff; it can't leave stains. As you use it, the gray hair becomes a darker, more youthful color. I want to convince you by sending my free trial bottle and book telling All About Gray Hair.

ARTHUR RHODES, Hair Color Expert, Dept. 39, LOWELL, MASS.

PAYS Up To 233% Profit

This MAGIC-DISC HEATS WATER INSTANTLY!

60 SECOND DEMONSTRATION

EVERY HOME CAN AFFORD THIS AMAZING LOW COST NEW IMPROVED ELECTRIC WATER HEATER.

Made by an Old Reliable Company. Amazing New Principle Heats Water Instantly. Just plug in the light socket. SELLS FAST and Pays Agents up to 233% PROFIT. NO RISK SAMPLE OFFER. Write at once for details.

THE LUX COMPANY

Dept. H-69 Elkhart, Ind.

spit lead. Four guns leaped and pounded, filling the room with their roaring thunder. A searing shock lanced under Pecos' left arm, twisting him sideways. A slug smashed a concho from his chaps, sent it spinning against the wall.

Steadily he chopped his guns up and down, feeling their jarring recoil through his whole body. Then Hacker collapsed like a punctured balloon and Blaze, a surprised look on his face, fired one more shot, swayed, and folded up across him. Pecos' smoking guns swung to Gotch and Kenny.

"Don't shoot!" yelled the lawyer, raising his hands.

"I won't," gritted the Texan. "I need at least one witness that I claimed the ranch." His hard eyes swung to Kenny. "Well?"

The big man shrugged helplessly, taking off his hat.

"I know when I'm licked," he muttered. "But . . . *it ain't yet!*"

There was a loud report, a puff of smoke burst out of the crown of his hat and a terrific blow in the right shoulder smashed Pecos back against the wall. Even as he started to sink he realized how his uncle had met his death. Kenny carried a derringer concealed in the crown of his hat. He had plugged old Ben as he had just plugged the lean Texan. Now, eyes blazing, the saloon-keeper clawed his gun from its holster, leveled it for a finishing shot. Slowly, almost wearily, Pecos lifted his left hand. His Colt barked and a round hole appeared between Kenny's eyes. As the blood washed down over his contorted face, he went backward and lay still.

A grey fog seemed to be gathering before Pecos' eyes. Dimly he heard the pound of hoofs outside, saw Hilda help her father into the smoke filled room. A man with a sheriff's star pinned on his chest followed them. With a soft cry the girl knelt at his side, pillowed his head on her breast.

"Oh, darling," she sobbed, "I . . . I should have known. After you left, dad told me you were Larry Taylor, told me why you'd acted like that in town."

"Knew you right away," said Ericson. "Recognized that scar." He pointed to the diamond shaped scar at the corner of Pecos' right eye. "You got it falling off a horse when you was a little tyke visiting your uncle here. That's why I let you get the gun away from me, figured you had come back as a stranger to find old Ben's murderer, and had roughed up Hilda to get in with Kenny's gang." He saw the snubnosed derringer that lay between Kenny's body and his hat. "So that's how he did it, eh?"

Pecos hardly heard him. With the last remnants of his strength he was pulling Hilda closer to him, feeling the resilient firmness of her breast against his cheek, conscious of the sob-racked quivering of her body, the moist sweetness of her lips. He was smiling blissfully. She wasn't just humoring a wounded man. She felt toward him as he did toward her. He let his eyes close without fearing that he would not open them again. He had the best reason now that a man ever had for fighting his way up out of the valley of the shadow of death.

HELP YOURSELF to SUCCESS!

Here's a happy fellow! Nothing for him to worry about! He's "sitting pretty" because he was wise enough to prepare himself for a government job. Would you like to be in his boots? Get a copy of

'CIVIL SERVICE HANDBOOK'

This single volume contains many SIMPLIFIED Home Study Courses for different Civil Service jobs. Also, a wealth of general information on HOW TO GET A GOVERNMENT JOB—Federal, State, City or County.
Includes 1000 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS of former tests—90 actual previous examinations (with correct replies)—covers many positions, such as bookkeeper, librarian, postal clerk, mail carrier, electrician, fireman, prison keeper, etc., etc.

THOUSANDS OF NEW JOBS!

Almost every day the government announces new jobs! Are you ready for YOUR big opportunity? Remember, only those who "know the ropes" can pass these examinations with high ratings. Isn't it worth a little effort to prepare yourself for a life-time of security?

LET THIS BOOK HELP YOU

Let the "CIVIL SERVICE HANDBOOK" help YOU the way it has already helped thousands of others—take advantage of this opportunity for YOURSELF! In this book you will find very important examination "tips"—the mistakes to avoid in arithmetic, grammar spelling, geography, history, civics—just the information usually called for in Civil Service exams.

Send No Money

Fill out and mail the coupon below at once. The "CIVIL SERVICE HANDBOOK" will be sent to you ON APPROVAL. You pay postman $1, plus postage. If the book is not more than satisfactory, return it in 5 days and your payment will be refunded.

Mail Coupon Today

NATIONAL LIBRARY PRESS, Dept. 513,
110 West 42nd St., New York, N. Y.

Send me for approval a copy of

"CIVIL SERVICE HANDBOOK"

I will pay the postman $1 (plus postage) with the understanding that if I am not completely satisfied I may return the book to you in 5 days, and you will refund my payment.

Name .....

Address .....

City .....*State*.....

☐ If you wish to have book sent postage paid enclose $1, plus 10c for postage charges, and check this box.

NOW YOU CAN BE BOSS OF "A SMALL BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN"

Do you need more money? Would you like to be your own boss—at work that you enjoy doing? Roger Babson, one of the greatest business experts in America, says, "Your real goal should be to get a small business of your own." Now YOU, too, can take this sound advice! The book pictured below shows you the practical money-making plans now being used by thousands of men and women. America is still the land of opportunity! The 1000 successful plans in "A SMALL BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN" PROVE that the average man or woman can make plenty of extra money with these money-making ideas!

1000 MONEY-MAKING PLANS

—*Without Capital Investment*

Many of the money-making plans in this book require no investment of money—just your willingness to use these ideas for your own benefit. You will find in these pages plans exactly suited to YOU. No special experience or education is necessary.

START WORK TODAY!

These plans have been used successfully by all types of people—educated and uneducated, old and young, men and women, strong and weak. It is truly amazing what YOU can do—when you know how!

Why be idle a day longer than you have to? These plans are practical ones that can be started at once!

SEND NO MONEY!

Have a copy of "A SMALL BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN" in your home for 5 days' approval—if you do not find in it A BIG MONEY-MAKING PLAN FOR YOU, return the book and you owe nothing. Send no money now. Just mail the coupon today!

GET TO WORK AT ONCE!

NATIONAL LIBRARY PRESS, Dept. 514,
110 West 42nd St., New York, N. Y.

Send me for approval a copy of

"A SMALL BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN"

(1000 Spare-Time Money-Making Ideas)

I will pay the postman $1 (plus postage) with the understanding that if I am not completely satisfied I may return the book to you in 5 days and you will refund my payment.

Name .....

Address .....

City .....*State*.....

☐ If you wish to have book sent postage paid enclose $1, plus 10c for postage charges, and check this box.

SPECIAL OFFER

FREE!

Handsome Bill Fold and Card Case with this Bronze SOCIAL SECURITY PLATE

Keep a permanent record of your Social Security number! Convenient, life-time bronze plate is stamped with your name and number—for only 25c. A beautiful pocket-piece . . . a valuable identification.

FREE BILL Fold Included

With your plate we give you, absolutely FREE of extra charge, this leatherette bill fold and card case with transparent pockets to hold your S S plate and car license. Just send your name, address and Social Security number, printed plainly on paper, with 25c, and we will ship you stamped plate and bill fold by RETURN MAIL!

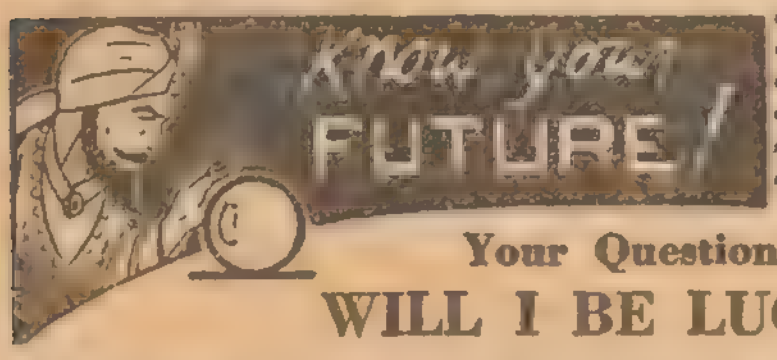
AGENTS WANTED— Write and ask us about our money-making proposition.

RELIABLE SALES CO., Dept. FG,
6 West 28th Street, New York

PILES DON'T SUFFER

NEEDLESSLY. Try this Wonderful Treatment

for pile suffering FREE! If you are troubled with itching, bleeding or protruding piles, write for a FREE sample of Page's Combination Pile Treatment and you may bless the day you read this. Write today to the E. R. PAGE COMPANY, Dept. 548-D2 Marshall, Michigan.



Your Question??

WILL I BE LUCKY??

The Fortunescope thrills, surprises, Shocks—but IT TELLS YOU WHAT TO DO! Ask it any Question and let the Cards Give You the Answer. BELIEVE IN SIGNS? Take this wonderful device seriously, and it will give you serious answers with regard to Money, Love, Lucky Games, Bad Luck, Trouble, etc. Take it in fun and it will be the "Life of the Party". Foretells your lucky omens and time. It WILL MAKE A HIT With YOU!!!

BE A WINNER and order NOW!

Send your name and address with 50c in cash or stamps, and we will ship you this unique, fascinating and uncanny fortune teller within 24 hours.

PALACE SALES CO.
Room 803-C, 125 East 46th St., New York, N. Y.

Tumbleweed Thaws

(Continued from page 90)

my face with a handful of snow.

"What happened?" I managed. And, "Who—?"

"Tumbleweed," she said, as proud and reverent as if she'd said God. "He rode the train to Canton, from Hereford, then bought a horse and rode back, fearing Staffel would come after you. He wounded Staffel and captured Storm Kilday. They're tied up back in the brush now. Isn't he wonderful?"

I got to my feet, tottered, muttered, "Where's Tumbleweed now?" Then I saw him. The cabin had gone like a tinderbox all right. Only one wall was standing, the north wall. The rest was a bed of embers, glowing and red. And right in the middle of that bed of coals sat old Tumbleweed Terry, all wrapped up in steaming blankets. Tilly helped me and I wobbled as close as I could.

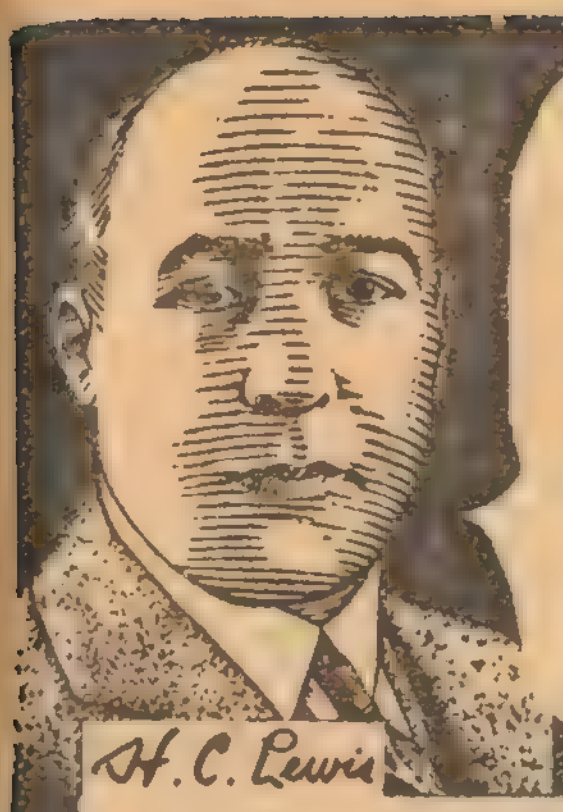
"Tom, Tom," I yelped, for to me he'd always be Tom, not Tumbleweed. "Come out of there, quick."

"I can't," he called back dolefully. "I'm wet as a fish. Damn it all, riding over from Canton I was in such a hurry I forgot about that Devil's Drink. I went in again! I got to dry out or freeze stiff."

"But you'll burn up," I yelled, "your blankets are smoldering now!"

"Smoldering hell," he called back. "This is the first time I been warm since I left the Border. Go on now, and tend to your business."

So I tended to it. I kissed Tillie.

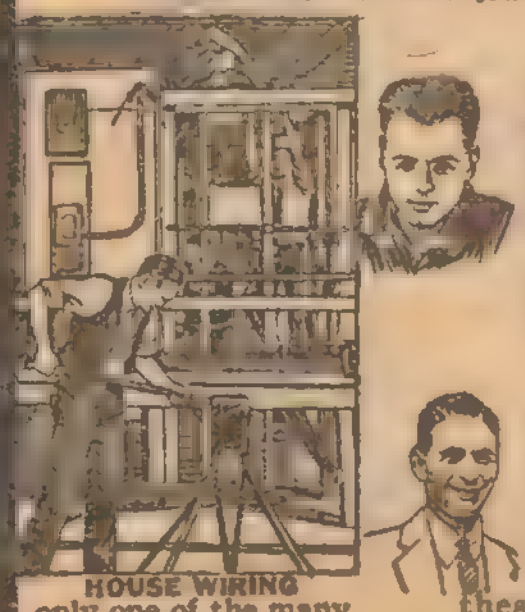


TRAIN THIS QUICK EASIER WAY FOR ELECTRICITY

12 Weeks Practical WORK IN MY CHICAGO SHOPS

FIRST—You are told and shown how to do it.

THEN—You do the job yourself.



HOUSE WIRING only one of the many branches you "Learn By Doing."

"... Everything was just as stated in literature. And by Coyne methods plenty of instructors to take care of everything, easy to learn. I really was satisfied with Coyne Training." J. Halyk, Canada

"... Coyne has first class instructors to teach you the simplest things to start with and they have the equipment to show you these things as you advance..." Ben Rickman, S. Car.

WANT TO EARN MORE MONEY?

Have you ever dreamed of holding down a steady, good pay job? Have you ever dreamed of doing the work you really like in a job that holds promise of a **real future** in the years ahead?

Well, we all know that you can't get the good things in life by just **dreaming** about them. Hundreds of fellows are today holding down mighty fine jobs with prospects of a bright future. They are filling these jobs because they had the foresight to equip themselves with the **right kind of training.** Most of these men were only average fellows a short time ago, but the proper training helped to lift them out of the low pay ranks of unskilled workers. The same opportunity is now offered to **you.**

The great fascinating field of **ELECTRICITY** offers a real future to many men and young men who are willing to prepare for a place in this giant industry.

AN EXTRA 4 WEEKS COURSE IN RADIO INCLUDED

Here at my school in Chicago, the world's Electric Center, you can get **12 weeks Shop Training in ELECTRICITY,** then I'll include **an extra 4 weeks Course in Radio** that can help give you your start towards a better job.

You will be trained on actual equipment and machinery and because of our method of training, you **don't need previous experience or advanced education.**

Here in my school you work on generators, motors, dynamos, you do house wiring, wind armatures and do actual work in many other branches of electricity and right now I'm including valuable instruction in **Diesel electricity, Electric Refrigeration and Air Conditioning** at **no** extra tuition cost. Our practical shop methods make it **easier to learn—First** the instructors **tell** you **how** a thing should be done, **then** they **show** you how it should be done—**then you do the actual work yourself.**

I'll Finance Your Training

You can get this training **first—then pay for it later in easy monthly payments,** starting **60 days** after your 12 weeks training period is over—**then you have 12 months** to complete your payments.

Send the coupon today for all details. When I get it I'll send you my big free book containing dozens of pictures of students at work in my shops. I'll also tell you about my **"Pay After Graduation" plan,** how many **earn while learning** and how we help our students **after graduation.** Fill in, clip coupon, mail **today for your start toward a brighter future.**

SEND FOR FREE BOOK

The Coyne Electrical School is 40 years old. Many hundreds of young men have become successful through Coyne training. My free book tells you how you, too, can get a training that will give you your start to a better job and a real future.

H. C. LEWIS, President

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL

500 S. Paulina Street, Dept. 59-17, Chicago, Illinois

H. C. LEWIS, President, Coyne Electrical School, 500 S. Paulina Street, Dept. 59-17, Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir: Please send me free your big catalog and full particulars of your **Extra 4 Weeks Radio Course,** also your **"Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation" Plan** and all other features.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

Mail in envelope or paste on postcard

Death Is on the House

(Continued from page 61)

a young hothead in trouble so's his sister can pull him out is bad dealin' . . . . An I up 'er ten."

"What the hell's your mouth running off like this for?" Broone snarled. "Play poker, or go hire yourself a hall."

"I'm playin' poker, ain't I?" Whirl hooted, raking in another pot.

"You ain't ridin' no ol' mule to market. I'm bust," the puncher said, shaking his head as he got up.

BROONE pushed back his chair. "I got to get money from the safe," he snarled. He disappeared in the rear. When he returned, he wore a cunning look of satisfaction on his face.

"You better get out of this, Kip," he advised, picking up the deck. "Your dry nurse, here, might not like your missing prayer meeting."

"Hell with him!" Kip looked at his diminished pile of coin. He glared at Whirl, who studied his cards until a warm arm dropped across his shoulders and a soft breath touched his cheek.

He looked around.

A blondined girl with hard lines around her mouth, pouted smiling red lips at Whirl, pursing them suggestively. She ran one hand down his arm and moved voluptuous hips in a short cut, skin-fitting gown.

"Hon," she hummed through white teeth. "I love a winner. And you'll love Essie before we're many more hours acquainted." She leaned and laid her cheek on his head, and white flesh bulged generously out of the extreme neck of the dress.

Broone said, low and to the drunken Kip: "Your money, now your girl. I thought you were a man, Kip. I—"

"Damn you!" Kip squalled, staggering to his feet. "Damn you, Arrow!"

He started pulling at the cheap pistol on his hip.

"Kip, you fool!" Whirl shouted, lunging to his feet.

The girl, Essie, clutched his arm and got him off balance. She leaped back. It was then too late for Whirl to plunge in and grab Kip's arm. The nickel-plated weapon cracked spitefully.

Kip King, then, stood, white-faced and sobering, with a smoking pistol in his shaking hand. He groaned as he looked down at Whirl Arrow, who'd fallen like a man hit with an axe. Whirl didn't move.

The pistol fell from Kip's limp hand.

MEN rushed in from the street and Kip stared blankly at the Roamer marshal. He seemed to be under water when he heard Cass Broone say: "I ain't prepared to say if it was self defense or murder, marshal. Later on my mind'll be made up."

"Someday," the marshal said with open enmity, "a man'll come

$12.00 Worth of Thrills and Romance for 98¢

REPLENISHING JESSICA — Maxwell Bodenheim

CONFLICT of LOVE and LUST

■ The story of a young woman, full of passion and the love of life. The conflict between lust and the spirit makes sensational reading that holds you spell-bound until the last page is finished. Reviewers tried in vain to prohibit its publication. Seventeen complete editions were sold at the original price of $2.

THE TIME OF HER LIFE — Cornell Woolrich

TURNED to the LURE of MAN

■ This $10,000 prize-winning author has written the amazing story of a very young, very alluring, very ruthless adventuress. Her mother had been the gay and reckless "Grass Widow" whose mad love of pleasure she inherited. Her life became a veil of silk concealing wild escapades with rich pleasure-sated men-about-town until, the final pages, she is tamed by *the* one. Even at $2 this was a "Best Seller."

PLENISHINGS OF DESIRE — J. Wesley Putnam

A STORY of PASSION

■ The flaming fire of a great and overpowering love in a smashing story that swings the glittering lights of Broadway to the sanctity of the North Woods. A strong emotional love-stirring novel of a rich roué and his wife and the rugged Big Woods guide who proves more sophisticated than was expected. The frank answer to the question "What does a faithful wife owe an unfaithful husband?" Many $2 editions of this "best seller" were sold out.

A VIRTUOUS GIRL — Maxwell Bodenheim

STARK DRAMA of ENDURING LOVE

■ The passionate story of Emmy-Lou . . . wistful, pinks and-white Emmy-Lou, 17 respectable years old in the corseted era of 1900. Alluring, born to love under the spell of a summer night and a boy whom her parents forbade. They called her "fast" in Chicago but Emmy-Lou believed in Romance and was ready to pay for it. A pulse-quickening drama of a girl's courage against the strangling conventions of respectability! Formerly $2.

THE MARRIAGE GUEST — Konrad Bercovici

REVOLT AGAINST CONVENTIONS

■ The tale of a vicarious loves of a fine, sensitive woman who has succumbed to the necessities of existence and conventionality, but whose fine spirit to the end, lives with, is loved by and bears children for the man she really loves. Stark drama of the crucifixion of three lives, through which runs the golden thread of a woman's passionate, enduring love, defying the world. $2 worth of intense drama!

BROADWAY RACKETEERS — John O'Connor

THE LUSTS of the RACKET MOBS

■ A masterpiece of the Main Stem by the Bernard Shaw of Broadway. You get both sides of the racket, plus the laughs and lusts of the racket mob, told in the jargon of Rackety land. Never before has Broadway artifice, in all its phases, blazing with illicit loves, honeycombed with intrigue, teeming with swift-paced lives, been exposed to the light as in this volume. Real life characters with authentic data exactly as originally sold in its $2 edition.

EACH BOOK ILLUSTRATED above in ORIGINAL FORMAT and BINDING has been RE-PRINTED and BOUND in MAGAZINE STYLE!

YOU can have all 6 for 98¢ PLUS POSTAGE

Hours of Exciting Reading for Less Than $1.00!

SENSATIONAL NOVELS BY MASTERS OF FICTION NOT ONE WORD OMITTED

Think of it—six books of thrilling fiction all recent "best sellers"—for *less than* half the price of *one* of them! These six thrilling books by famous authors are so enthralling, so gripping, that the public made them "best sellers" at $2. Every one is packed with romance and mystery, passion and intrigue . . . spell-binding in its fast moving action . . . that extra something that it takes to make people clamor for a copy!

EACH BOOK IS COMPLETE, BOUND SEPARATELY AND UNEXPURGATED

■ Each book—shown above as photographed in its original $2 binding—has been reprinted in clear, easily-read type on pages 6⅝ x 9⅜ inches and bound in magazine style. The attractive, heavy paper covers are alike so that the 6 books form a handsome set for your library. Not one word has been left out! Hours of exciting entertainment are yours . . . for only 98c!

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS ASTOUNDING OFFER NOW!

■ We are able to make you this astonishing offer only because of our tremendous volume of sales and because we want to introduce the Mayfair Editions of "best sellers" to new readers at this low price!

EDITION LIMITED . . . MAIL COUPON NOW!

ONLY FAMOUS "BEST SELLERS" ARE INCLUDED!

Every book selected for its record of popularity. We are so sure you will be delighted with these books that we guarantee to return your purchase price in five days if you are not completely satisfied. Don't miss this chance . . . send the coupon today while they last! You can't lose!

MAYFAIR PUBLISHING CO., Radio City, 1270 SIXTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N. Y.

MAYFAIR PUBLISHING CO.
1270 Sixth Ave., Dept 117, New York, N. Y.

Please send me the six best sellers. I will pay the postman 98c, plus a few cents postage on delivery. If I am not completely satisfied I will return the books within five days and the full purchase price will be refunded immediately.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____

If you enclose $1 with this coupon we will pay all postage charges. Canadian Orders $1.25 in advance. Foreign orders 6 shillings in advance.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED OR MONEY IMMEDIATELY REFUNDED

along who'll make up your dirty mind—with lead. Come on, kid, and try out the jail a spell."

As he led the prisoner out, Maia's cry caused him to pause on the scuffed board walk. "I heard the commotion, marshal. What is it? What has Kip done?"

"Shot and killed Whirl Arrow," Cass Broone said from behind her.

Maia sagged. It took nerve, and a will as hard as steel that hell itself could never melt, for her to keep her feet.

"I ain't made a statement," Broone told her. "I may decide he shot in self defense; or maybe decide he murdered Arrow . . . Or do you understand?"

He moved aside to let the doctor enter the saloon, saying, "No use hurrying, doc."

The marshal choked on his own anger. "Miss King, you be careful. Maybe Kip can get off, anyhow."

"Yes; yes, perhaps," said Maia dully. "But—but Whirl!" She turned, and before they could stop her, she rushed into the saloon.

The doctor knelt beside Whirl Arrow as men parted to let her through; men who pitied this poor, sweet kid whose lot in life seemed a triple dose of unadulterated hell.

The doctor had Whirl's chest bared. The chest, Maia thought in a stunned way, she had crushed herself against; the breast she had hoped might, in the days to come—

"He's not dead!"

The doctor's words hammered her confused senses. She stared at the object the doctor held up. It was a gold locket, bent and with a bullet's mark plain on it.

"Bullet hit this locket," the doctor explained, fumbling in his bag. "Saved his life. But the shock knocked him cold, of course."

He broke a small vial and held the strong odors so Whirl must breathe them. Whirl jerked, sat up with a "Whew! Who let that in?"

He blinked foolishly as Maia knelt, her arms around his neck, crying, "You're not dead! The locket saved you, Whirl."

Realization rocketed back into Whirl Arrow's mind.

"Maia, you go on out. I ain't dead. No, *I* ain't."

He looked over at Cass Broone as he rose shakily, clinging to a chair back for support. Broone leaned back against his bar, his flattish face mirroring dark hate, fear, perplexity.

"It'll be all right, dear," Whirl whispered. "Go away."

She knew it wouldn't be all right, yet she knew the ways of men. Maia went out of there, and men moved from between Cass Broone and Whirl Arrow.

"Well," said Arrow, conversationally. His confidence shook Broone to the core. "You got that Essie to steam the kid to gunning me. You knew I'd not shoot him, anyhow. But do you know you're —?"

MEN marveled at the cuss-words at Whirl's command; but condemned him for a fool for bucking into Cass Broone now. Broone had seen a plan blown up, a girl get away from him. Broone's all was here in Roamer, and he could not take this cussing and remain. Too, Whirl Arrow was a shaky man,

just the same as risen from the dead.

"You're asking for this Arrow," Cass Broone moaned, his dark face gone ashen.

"An' you got it," Whirl Arrow said, the sound of his gun still roaring in the saloon, the smoke still swirling from his pistol barrel.

Cass Broone was twisted back against the bar, his unfired six-gun in the litter at his feet. His head wabbled from side-to-side, his joints turned to rubber and he never made a sound as he folded to the floor.

"Gents," demanded Whirl, "is anybody wishful of argufyin' this?"

Nobody was.

Whirl smiled tightly. Kip, he knew, would be all right from now on out. No worry there. Despite the unpleasant feeling killing caused within him, Whirl Arrow was happier than ever he'd been before.

Usefulness, fulsomeness, a great love lay before him.

"Then, gents," he said back of a long, soft sigh, "I guess this death is on the house. An' the drinks go along with it."

Men moved barward, avoiding the spot where Cass Broone lay.

Whirl Arrow moved out into the night, into the soft arms, the sweet caress of Maia King.

NOW! World's Smallest RADIO

Midget radio fits your pocket or purse. Weighs only 4 ozs. Smaller than cigarette package! Receives stations with clear natural tone. NO CRYSTALS to adjust. NO UPKEEP—only one moving part. "AUDIOPHONE" gives superior performance. ENTIRELY NEW PATENTED DESIGN. Has enclosed geared luminous dial for perfect tuning. Many owners report amazing reception and distance.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Sent complete ready to listen with instructions for use in homes, offices, hotels, boats, in bed, etc. TAKES ONLY A SECOND TO CONNECT—NO ELECTRICITY NEEDED! SEND NO MONEY! Pay postman only $2.99 plus postage on arrival or send $2.99 (Check, M. O., Cash) and yours will be sent complete postpaid. A most unusual value. ORDER NOW! MIDGET RADIO CO., Dept. CP-7, Kearney, Nebr.

$1.00 STARTS LIFE POLICY THAT PAYS UP TO $3,000

Policy Sent for Free Inspection

An amazing new life insurance policy is now offered, on a non-medical plan, to men, women and children from 10 to 74 years of age. This policy provides up to $1,500 for natural death and up to $3,000 for accidental death, as specified, based on age. Thousands throughout the country have taken advantage of this low cost plan. Sold by mail only. That is why you can buy so much life protection with an initial payment of only $1.00. Send no money. You may receive a policy for Free inspection and full particulars without obligation. Simply send name, address and age to the Guaranty Union Life Insurance Company, Dept. 82K, Beverly Hills, California. Send today. (NO AGENT WILL CALL.)

BIG MONEY! STEADILY FOR YOU!

INCREASE YOUR INCOME

Be our representative in your locality for DOVE Work Garments. No experience necessary. Pleasant, simple work. Every business prospect. Advertising embroidered on garments—great sales feature. Increase your income every week. We supply everything needed to start at once, including FREE OUTFIT. Write Immediately.

BEN DOVE GARMENT CO. 801 S. Fourth St., Dept. 756 Kankakee Ill.

FORTUNE TELLING CARDS

The world famous fortune teller Madame Le Normand's own secret system and deck of cards in colors. Anyone knowing the key may read them at a glance. 'TELL FORTUNES' at parties, bazaars, or in your home for your own amusement. Send 50 cents in coin, stamps or M O

OCCULT BOX 59 DEPT. C-6 WHITESTONE, N. Y.

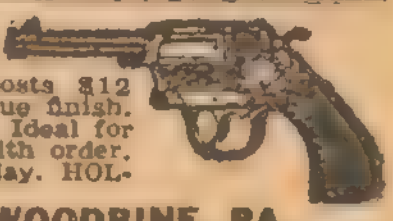
When You Stop in Baltimore, Md.

STOP AT . . . THE

$1.50 up FOR ONE OR TWO PERSONS

ARUNDEL HOTEL

FINAL SALE RUSH!!



ONLY $6.45—Double Action Revolver, costs $12 elsewhere, 22, 32 or 38 cal. Nickel or blue finish. Brand new. Powerful. Guaranteed 5 years. Ideal for target practice, 3 to 6 in. bbl. Send $1 with order. Cartridges free for cash in full. Order today. HOLSTER $1.50 Extra.

WINEHOLT CO. Box 10, WOODBINE PA.

MARRY RICH

Send for FREE photos and descriptions of rich and beautiful women who wish to marry. Jane Fuller Club, Box C-797, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

SONG POEMS

WANTED AT ONCE! Mother, Home, Love, Patriotic, Sacred, Comic or any subject. Don't delay—send us your original poem today for immediate consideration.

RICHARD BROS., 45 Woods Building, Chicago, Ill.

Cassidy is Sudden

(Continued from page 69)

legs. Her ankles were secured the same way on the other side and her rounded knees were whiter for the way they were held in place.

Fragments of what had been her dress clung to her here and there, and the red welts across her shoulder showed that the ruthless claws of Black Bart had ripped that dress from her body in a single jerk. He stood over her now.

Sudden sucked in his breath and his knuckles went white where his hand gripped the butt of his six-gun. Black Bart never had been closer to death than he was at that minute and second.

"Please—oo-oh—please—"

The plea came from the stripped woman in a strangled, muffled sob. Black Bart held a pointed shining knife in his hand. As his eyes went red and gloating, and his lips foamed over the sight of the tempting woman on the table before him, his hand went out and the point of the knife was drawn over the taut skin of her stomach.

"Whar'd yuh hide thet map?" slavered Black Bart. "Yuh snuck it away, thinkin' to keep me hog-tied to yore apern strings! Thunk you'd have a club over Black Bart's head! Hain't no woman critter ever had the say-so with Black Bart!"

Sudden's stomach almost turned over. The point of the knife went in and sliced a quick cross upon the woman's drawn, bare stomach. the hot blood of her welled and reddened her body. There were already such cuts in other places.

"Damn yuh!" rasped Black Bart. "The next time I'm cuttin' in tuh see what's under thet fancy silk doodad!"

"No-no-no!" the woman moaned. "Yuh cain't do that to me, Bart! Hain't I been lovin' yuh, an' didn't I allus come to yuh—"

"Shut yore yap!" snarled the outlaw. Then—

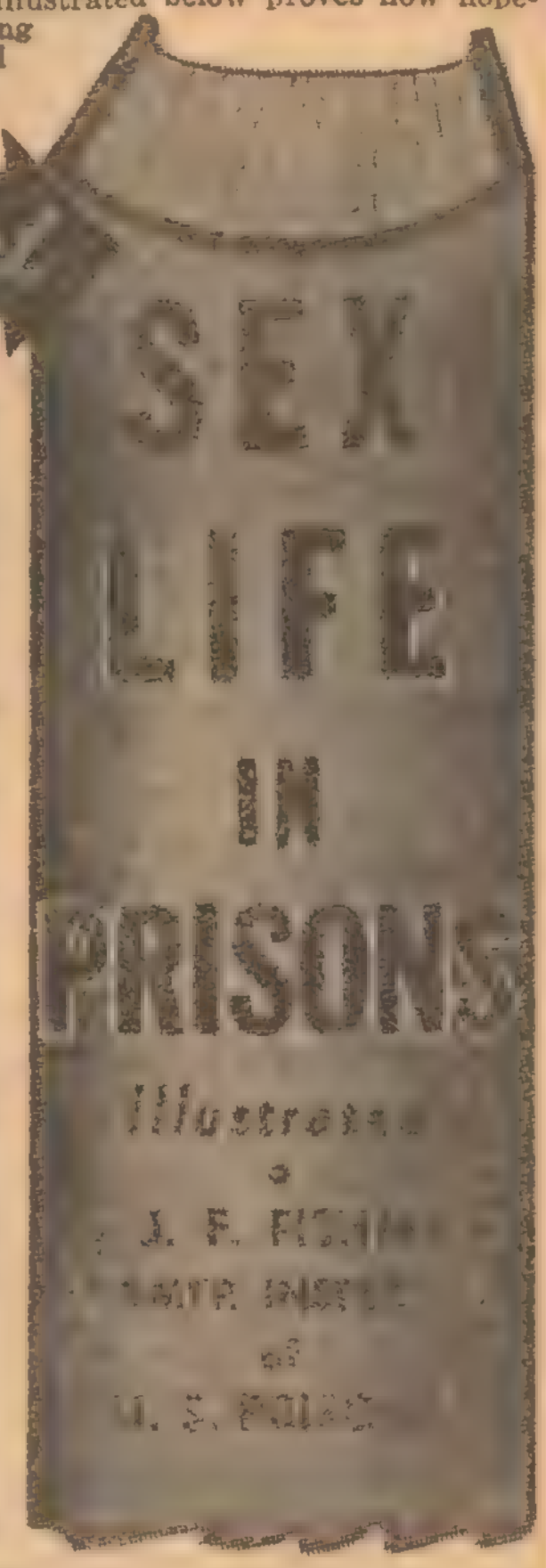
Possibly it was the sight of the blood. Black Bart showed all the beast that was in him. He threw himself forward, his heavy lips crushing the moaning mouth of the woman. Sudden could see the little trickle of blood from the cuts making horrible patterns along the woman's side, and her body heaved with her terrible effort to tear her wrists free, to pull her ankles from the grass rope that held them to the table legs.

Sudden's hand snapped away from his gun. His movement was as swift as that of a cougar striking from a high rock. The crunch of his knuckles upon Black Bart's jaw was a sound like the striking of a club on solid wood. It lifted the bulk of the outlaw, hurled him from the tortured woman and the table and rolled him on the floor.

BUT Black Bart was pounds heavier than Sudden, and his draw was instinctive. His gun was out of its holster, coming up, but it didn't flame. Sudden went all the

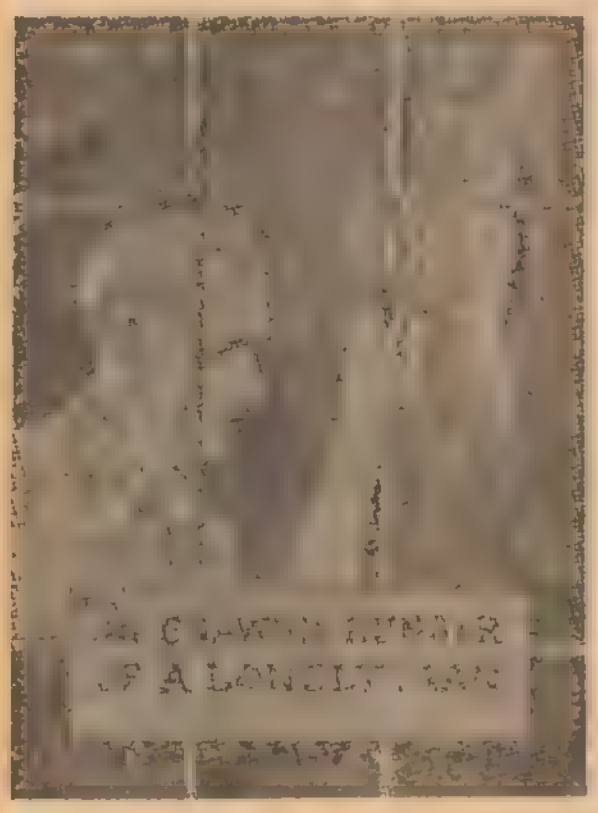
Can SEX Take A Holiday?

Do a man's sex needs cease when he is given a number instead of a name? Every grown person knows that the answer to this question is "NO!"—yet until now no one has dared to tackle the problem of SEX LIFE IN PRISONS with fearless realism! The amazing book illustrated below proves how hopeless it is to expect sex to take a holiday. It reveals with astonishing candor what happens to the sex passions of prisoners—how normal desires become *abnormal*—how SEX becomes to convicts a wild need ready to kill, to mutilate in order to find satisfaction!



DO CONVICTS REMAIN SEXUALLY SANE?

Now at last the greatest authority on prison life in America has pulled aside the veil of hypocrisy, and revealed the facts of sexual degeneracy among convicts. J. F. Fishman, for 18 years Federal Inspector of Prisons, has dared to lay the truth before the American public. Nothing like this has ever before been published—nowhere in all the literature of America is there such a candid, frank and fearless expose of this great social evil—the depraving and degenerating influence of prison life on convicts. Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes, world's famous sociologist and historian, says, "If one were consciously to plan an institution perfectly designed to promote sexual degeneracy he would create the modern prison." That is the situation which until this book was published, was hidden by a hush-hush policy of prudery!



Now the truth is exposed! Inspector Fishman visited more than 3500 prisons and jails in an official capacity representing the United States Government. In SEX LIFE IN PRISONS he reveals publicly for the first time mountains of confidential and inside information, facts and case histories.

A Burning Social Problem

Day after day newspapers throughout the country report brutal sex crimes committed by ex-convicts. What is to be done about it? Sudden assaults, rape, degrading self-abuse, trickery, bribery, homosexuality, exhibitionism, lesbianism—what a sorry list of perversions result from prison life! It took daring indeed to reveal these truths without camouflaging them—but only a daring expose can rouse the public to meet this burning social problem. You may shudder or be shocked when you read these pages but you will have a much better understanding of the dangers that lurk in every community, of why there are so many innocent sex crime victims.

Startling Facts About Sex Intrigues

It is truly amazing what queer practices prisoners will attempt to gain sexual gratification. No detective stories, no mere brain-created thrillers equal these bizarre escapades. The characters and plots of fiction are pale indeed alongside these true stories! Only life itself, twisted and distorted by the unnatural conditions of prison existence could produce such unbelievable episodes.

Here are a few of the topics covered in this big 256-page book (with 6 full-page illustrations): Sex Life in the Army and Navy—In boarding schools—Punishment for homosexual practices in the Navy—Sex fantasies of prisoners—Sex problems of female inmates—Male wardens of female prisons—Desperate daring of sex starved convicts—An astonishing case history—Women's tricks—Male workmen in female quarters—An ingeniously arranged affair—Exhibitionism—Intimacies of officials with female criminals—The "third sex"—Vicious "courting" of innocents by "wolves"—Catching them in the act—"Crazy with passion"—Why the open shower room was abolished—The "Kangaroo Court"—Spread of disease in prisons—Sex dreaming—Tantalizing memory fantasies—Prevalent abnormal practices—Do prisoners' wives remain faithful?—A startling innovation for solving the problem.

DARING! COURAGEOUS!

"The author lays bare a topic that too often has been spoken of in whispers, or altogether ignored." That is what Prof. Sheldon Glueck, of Harvard University Law School, says of SEX LIFE IN PRISONS. He continues: "It was high time that someone should tell the plain, unvarnished tale unfolded in this book. . . . A realistic stripping of the veil from a situation that needs to be aired." Dr. G. Kirchwey, former Warden of Sing Sing, says, "A book of courage and insight by one who knows the prisons."

SEND NO MONEY NOW

This is just a glimpse of the contents. You must see the book itself to realize how astonishing it is! Why not order your copy now? The regular price of $3.00 has been reduced for a limited time to only $1.98. Send no money—just mail the coupon with your name and address and pay the postman when the book arrives. If you are not completely satisfied you may return the volume in 5 days and receive a full refund of your payment. The convenient order form is ready for you—use it NOW!

NATIONAL LIBRARY PRESS, DEPT. C.P.
110 West 42nd St., New York, N. Y.

Forward at once, in plain wrapper, a copy of SEX LIFE IN PRISONS by former Inspector Fishman. I will pay postman $1.98 (plus postage) when the book arrives, with the understanding that if I do not find it satisfactory and send it back to you in five days you will refund my payment in full. (If payment accompanies order, book is sent postage free. Same return privileges.)

NAME ..... AGE.....
(Give Age—Sold only to adults)

ADDRESS.....

CITY..... STATE.....

way over the woman's bared body and the table, taking a dive that caused his hard skull to land upon Black Bart's breast-bone with a force that made Sudden think for the time he had broken his own neck.

Black Bart let his breath out with a whoosh and an oath. But his bear-like arms locked around Sudden's neck with a pressure that put red spots in front of Sudden's eyes. All the rules were out now. Sudden knew he could never beat the brutish strength of the outlaw, even if his fists did keep smashing into the black stubbled face.

There was but one way. Sudden took it. He lifted one boot and he doubled his leg with the knee striking. Black Bart said, "Aw-rr-gh" and his arms turned to rubber that slipped from Sudden's neck.

Sudden came to his feet, dizzied, but thinking fast. None of the other owlhooters ever came near Black Bart's sod dugout. The depths in the salty ground might have muffled the sounds. Sudden got to the door, had a look-see. The other outlaws were still swigging red-eye and disputing over their split.

Sudden whipped back. The woman still moaned where she was bound on the table, but that would have to wait. Sudden's lean, strong hand shot down and fastened in Black Bart's hair. The outlaw was groaning, both hands clasped across his belly, trying to ease the pain and sickness.

Sudden had witnessed the brutal torture of the woman. True, she was a killer and deserving of no sympathy for the pay she had collected from Black Bart. But Sudden was thinking of the dark eyes and the warm, red lips of Rita who had accepted comfort from his kiss, and returned an unexpected promise with her own.

Sudden's thumb pushed into Black Bart's ear until he could feel the cartilage yielding.

"I'm wantin' to know the name-a the head ramrod-a this outfit in Snake Gulch?" he said calmly. "If you don't spill it, Bart, you're losin' yore ears and you ain't never hearin' with either-a them from this time on. If you tell, you live, an' if you keep yore tongue buttoned up, I'm honin' to slice you up for buzzard bait, an' I'll cut you just as slow an' careful as you did yore woman."

Sudden's thumb ground in and started to twist. Black Bart tried to bring up his hands from his burning belly, and Sudden smashed his other fist into his stomach.

"Hate to turn myself into one-a yore kind, Bart," he said slowly. "But it seems as how this is the only kind-a lingo you savvy."

Blood was beginning to seep from Black Bart's head around his ear. The smoke in Sudden's blue eyes proved that he meant what he said.

"Done some bad shootin' back there at the Derring cabin, didn't you, Bart?" suggested Sudden abruptly. "Must-a got the sights-a yore irons jammed on a rock some-'ere's. The sheriff didn't make any bull's-eye with that carbine either?"

Black Bart hadn't the slightest

doubt he was about to lose an ear. His breath wheezed out. Sudden could hear the low moaning of pain from the bound woman on the table. He kept a hand ready, for if the other owlhooters suspected, he'd have to do the best he could to try and gun himself out of this.

Then words wheezed along with Black Bart's breath.

"Wouldn't-a missed no hombre at thet distance, 'cept he wuz—"

"Yup!" snapped Sudden, feeling the crushed ear now under his calloused thumb. "Go on!"

"Ponder's the owlhoot boss—"

HOURS later, with the sun dropping and dusty dusk shrouding the white clay-walled town of Snake Gulch, Sudden Cassidy reined up on a bluff overlooking the straggling gold and cattle center. Pinpoints of lights here and there already were beginning to spread to a yellow glow.

"If I only had a loop on which one of them's the place where she is, the goin' might be easier," muttered Sudden. "Ain't ever honed more to put the steel on any hombre's wrists than his'n."

Which reflected the thoughts seething in Sudden's brain. First, and that didn't go with the badge in his boot, was Rita Derring. Her dark eyes, swimming in tears, were roiling his mind. He couldn't forget a kiss of comfort that became a sort of promise.

Second, there was the red-faced, hard-jawed Sheriff Ponder. Damn him! If any harm had come to Rita, Sudden knew the first name and all of the ancestors of one range dick who was more likely to

FUN for SPORT
Comic
BOOKLETS
VEST POCKET SIZE
CARTOONS
6 NEW POCKET SIZE BOOKLETS
16 PAGES OF CARTOONS
SIZE 3x4 INCHES
COMIC STORIES
6 NEW POCKET SIZE COMIC STORY BOOKLETS — 16 PAGES 3x4 INCHES
LETTERS
NEW! 6 FOLDER BOOKLETS OF 4 PAGES EACH, CONTAINS A COMIC LOVE-LETTER THAT WILL MAKE A HORSE LAUGH!
POCKET CARDS
40 POCKET SIZE CARDS (EACH ONE DIFFERENT) DON'T MISS THEM!
SPECIAL OFFER
EVERYTHING AS ADVERTISED ON THIS CIRCULAR SENT POSTPAID FOR ONLY $1.00
EXTRA GIFT OFFER:
A NEW SNAPPY COMIC NOVELTY MISS MARIE SNAP AND ACTION HERE!!
COMIC SHOP
2463 KENSINGTON AVE.
Philadelphia, Pa. Dept. MF

MIMI AND FIFI!
Two Chorines from Gay Paree
They wiggle, they shimmy, they can-can! They're the most alluring and sex-sational dancers you ever saw! Amuse yourself and your friends with their life-like and natural burlesque dancing. Send 35c for both, or $1.00 for three pairs, and they will be shipped to you immediately, prepaid. List of other interesting and unusual novelties sent FREE only with order. Don't delay, order now.
GOODWIN SUPPLY CO., Dept. S-26, 972 Broad Street, Newark, N. J.

NATURAL BIRTH CONTROL
Now size of family can be controlled in the natural way—without drugs or contraceptives. The Steri-Graph or "Rhythm" method of natural birth control is endorsed by leading physicians and clinics. In wide and successful use. The new method based on the definite fertile and sterile days in the month. Medical and church approval. Latest information for married women. Learn the facts! Send 10c for booklet. "Natural Birth Control." NATIONAL HYGIENIC SOCIETY, 367 Medical Arts Bldg., Springfield, Mo.

LONELY? You are someone's ideal. We can help you find happiness, contentment. Many charming men and women seeking love, marriage, companionship. Let us bring you romance, introduce you by letter. You'll like our service. Dignified, confidential. Details in plain sealed envelope. Box 6734, Philadelphia, Penna.

LONELY? Find your sweetheart and happiness through this select social correspondence society. Confidential introductions by letter. Members everywhere; all ages. Dependable, dignified service for refined ladies and gentlemen. Romance awaits you! Sealed particulars free.
Write EVAN MOORE, Box 988, JACKSONVILLE, FLA.

LONELY? Let nationally known Church organization (Undenominational.) supply desirable friends or helpmate for you. Stamp and age for full particulars. REV. J. JONES, P. O. Box 2459, Kansas City, Mo.

lead poison a wanted hombre than to round him up alive and healthy.

Back in the *malpais,* far back, Black Bart had been left tied up with knots he could never loosen. Beside him was the woman he had tortured, herself a killer. Sudden had gone easy there. What she had done, he figured, was because of too much of the same thing that was boiling in his own blood right now.

So he had bathed her tortured wounds, did the best he could with them, and wrapped her warmly in blankets before he had tied her beside Black Bart. He had been compelled to gag both. Then he had come out, and was sure he had run a ranny on the other owlhooters.

"Black Bart wants to be alone with his redhead, so I'm ridin' to size up a pocket meadow herd of yearling beef on the Double-D," he had lied to them. "Any-a you owlhooters honin' to have his brisket plump split can go pesterin' 'round Black Bart when he's busy like he is now."

The outlaws had nodded and grinned avidly. They could see what Sudden meant. So Sudden had come riding straight to Snake Gulch.

His red bay stiff-legged down the steep slope of the crooked street leading into the town. Sheriff Ponder had seen him this morning. Others of the sheriff's small posse at the burning cabin had seen him.

But Sudden made the livery stable, put up the tired bay and high-heeled out without anything happening. There were two plank walks and two dance hall saloons shot the most light across the white dusted street.

Sudden slouched as he walked, hands swinging, but ready for an instant draw. He had carefully greased both holsters of the cedar-butted .45's on the way out of the malpais. There would be more than Sheriff Ponder to deal with. Sudden wagered that all of his deputies were wearing his brand.

Sudden had figured out where some of Black Bart's cattle raids might have thrown some of the best spreads on the Snake Gulch range into Ponder's hands. No. He wouldn't be playing a lone hand in the town.

But hell and all! Sudden wanted to see Sheriff Ponder first. All he wanted was to have the hard-jawed lawman start for his irons. One of the two saloons was the most likely spot. The darkness was deeper down here in the gulch. The lamplight made pools of blackness in which a hombre couldn't have spotted even a white cat.

All at once, Sudden felt it. Perhaps it was scuffling movement from several directions. Possibly it was the queerness of shifting shadows, figures of townsmen from one pool of blackness to another.

"Must-a had a sign on me from the time I leathered up at the head of the street," muttered Sudden. "They ain't no way now but to get a hog-leg on the sheriff's belly 'fore some gulcher splits my backbone. An' that ain't—"

He ceased muttering. Ground his bootheels into the planks and shifted quickly into a blind spot between lances of lamplight.

Amazing NEW IRONING CORD SET

"WRIST-ACTION" *Swings In ANY DIRECTION*

It Spins ROUND and ROUND and SWINGS from SIDE to SIDE

Cannot kink or twist.

The NO-TRO WRIST-ACTION PLUG prevents broken wires and burnt-out fuses.

• A Sensational Money-Maker •

ONE-MINUTE *demonstration* **AMAZES HOUSEWIVES**

Swings freely in any direction. Ends kinking and twisting—prevents broken wires and burned fuses. Complete swivel action; plug spins round and round—swings from side to side—keeps cord out of the way when ironing—simply show it and the customer wants it.

No Bending, Kinking or Twisting

• Listed by Underwriter's Laboratories

Men - Women! *the biggest opportunity of your life*

No wonder housewives say: "Just what I want" as soon as they lay eyes on it. Sales are instant—sure! Nothing like it on the market. Here is an easy selling, big money-maker that offers you a bigger income with less effort than anything you ever sold before—even if you never sold anything in your life you have an equal opportunity. Every home that uses electricity is a prospect—every home has had their share of troubles with common cord sets—this means big sales and big profits for you in your territory. But you must hurry if you want preference in that locality. Write immediately for sensational money-making plan.

WRITE for this big money maker TODAY!

FREE *demonstrator starts you - -*

Get the story at once. Learn how you can GET YOUR DEMONSTRATOR FREE. Get the proof of what others are doing in their territory.

PASTE COUPON ON 1c POSTCARD

NO-TRO ELECTRIC APPLIANCE CORP.
800 N. Clark St., Dept. W-11,
Chicago, Ill.

Please rush me FREE information and sample offer at once. This does not obligate me.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

No-Tro Electric Appliance Corp.

800 N. CLARK ST., DEPT. W-11, CHICAGO, ILL.

Sheriff Ponder appeared from a small pine building that had windows which laid a pattern of black bars on the ground outside. That must be the town calaboose. Sudden grinned wryly. It was an even break whether his badge would work or he would wind up looking out through those bars.

The badge was out of his boot now. It was pinned to his checkered woolen shirt. Might be some honest townsmen who would draw cards if it came to an open ruckus.

Sheriff Ponder's heavy, hard-jawed face was outlined in the saloon light over the batwing doors. His thick lips wore a twisted smile. Sudden didn't know why that almost turned his hard sense, made him think of Rita Derring, and made him want to lead blaze the crooked lawman without waiting to try at putting the steel on his thick wrists.

Sudden caressed the smooth cedar butts of his guns, but stiffened himself against dragging his irons. More shadows shifted across the slices of lamplight here and there. He seemed to be the center of the movement, as if a dozen men were furtively bearing down upon him.

Wouldn't be sense to walk into the light of the saloon until he made sure of the number and position of these shadows, and if they really were enemies. For Sheriff Ponder had given them no attention, had slapped through the batwing doors without once glancing around.

Sudden reached a space between two buildings, decided to step back through and come around another way. He made but one stride. It might have been a gun butt or a club that cracked down between his eyes. The darkness suddenly blazed with light, then the light went out.

THE light returned, seemed to burn his aching eye-balls. And he was looking at the iron bars of a window. When he turned he was fronted by a rusty iron grating, with a door filled with six-inch squares. A flat-nosed, straw-haired hombre was tilted in a chair with a .45 dangling from a low-slung holster.

Sudden didn't have to strain his mind any to know this flat-nosed hombre was the jailer. So he was in the town calaboose. His first thought was for that badge on his shirt. It wasn't there. It wasn't anywhere upon him.

Harsh voices growled outside the window. The volume of sound increased. Sudden got up dizzily and looked out. He could see the street and many men milling around.

"Shore 'nough got 'im!" cracked a strident voice. "Head o' them malpais owlhooters, opines the sheriff! By hokey! I hain't fer waitin' fer no court shenanigans! Got some o' my best spring critters an' now I can't meet the note on my spread! I'm fer draggin' him at the heels o' a cayuse all the way to the salt badlands an' leavin' 'im fer the buzzards an' them other owlhooters to look upon! L'arn 'em somethin'!"

"Yup!"

"Yo're kerrect, Jake!"

"Stretchin' his neck is too muyo

pronto an' won't help none headin' off his kind!"

Sudden had a sick sensation at the pit of his stomach. Those were the voices of honest, vengeful cattlemen. The mob was swelling. Maybe some of Sheriff Ponder's deputies were out there helping stir up their blood.

Sudden glanced at the flat-nosed jailer. He looked beyond him and saw the lighted square of an inside window. The jailer was snoring. He had a bottle of red-eye beside him. A drunk jailer wouldn't amount to much against that growling mob of honest cow owners out there in the street.

Sudden didn't have to guess that Sheriff Ponder wouldn't be standing between his prisoner and the lynch mob with his guns. The sheriff—?

Then Sudden's blood went icy. His eyes had gone to the inside lighted window. He saw Sheriff Ponder. And he saw the dark-eyed Rita Derring with her black hair streaming.

It was well that her hair was lustrous and long. For it was about all that concealed her. Her waist, possibly all of her dress had been torn from her slim body. There were glimpses of her young, white breasts through the streaming hair. There was the white of her slender, weaving body as far as Sudden could see to the level of the windowsill.

The oath that came to Cassidy's tongue should have melted the rusted iron. His lean hands gripped the grating until the skin of his knuckles was white and almost cracking.

To introduce our new Sterling Silver Simulated Diamond Rings, decorated in 1/30 14K Gold, **we** will give you your choice of man's **gold plate front** or ladies' 1939 **jeweled** wrist watch with every ring ordered **NOW** and **paid for within one year on our new easy two $2 payment plan!** (total only $4). The watch comes to you as a **Gift** . . . . It does not cost you one cent extra! Wear 10 days on approval! Mail **coupon or postcard** NOW! **SEND NO MONEY** with order! We pay postage. **We Trust You!** Your package comes by **return mail!**

Gold Standard Watch Co.,
Dept. A-705, Newton, Mass.
Rush offer. ☐ Lady's ☐ Man's
Name .....
Address .....

FREE SAMPLES OF REMARKABLE TREATMENT FOR

Stomach Ulcers

(Due to Gastric Hyper-Acidity)

H. H. Bromley, of Rutland, Vt., writes: "I suffered for 10 years with acid-stomach trouble. Doctors all told me I had ulcers and would have to diet the rest of my life. Before taking your treatment I weighed 143 pounds and could eat nothing but soft foods and milk. Now, after taking Von's Tablets, I weigh 171 pounds, can eat almost anything and feel perfectly well." If you suffer from acid indigestion, gastritis, heartburn, bloating or any other acid stomach trouble you, too, should receive quick relief. Send for FREE Samples of this wonderful treatment and details of guaranteed trial offer. Valuable Booklet is included. Write

PHILADELPHIA VON CO., Dept. 469-F
Fox Bldg., Philadelphia, Pa.

NEED MONEY?

No experience or investment required to earn steady income in spare or full time, selling customized shirts and sportswear factory to wearer. Our sales force earns over $100,000.00 yearly. Get YOUR share! Simply write orders. We deliver and collect. Postcard brings you complete money-making outfit FREE. Write immediately to Dept. 235, Rosecliff-Quaker Corp., 1239 Broadway, N. Y.

Like To Meet New

PEN PALS?

Many clients have developed romances ending happily. Why be lonely? Let us arrange introductions by mail. We may have just the type person you desire. Correspondence sealed, confidential. Write for particulars.

ELLANDEE SERVICE, Box 248, Malone, N. Y.

For Sheriff Ponder's huge, crushing arms were around the girl. Her hands were up, pushing at his face. But the sheriff was bending her back with his strength and her hands fell before the jamming of his face against her own, the laying of his thick lips upon her red mouth.

Then there was but one of the sheriff's arms in view, clamped about Rita's bared shoulders, and his other hand must have been upon the resisting back. If the girl screamed or attempted it, there was no sound.

SUDDEN dallied his own senseless, barehanded attack upon the rusty iron grating. He deliberately stumbled, fell to his knees. Then he let out a weak cry, but sufficient to cause the flat-nosed jailer to open his eyes and drop the front of his chair.

Sudden's head was back, but his face was pressing the grating.

"A drink—I'm chokin'—for God's sake, gimme a drink—"

The jailer shook his head, trying to clear the redeye sleep from his stupid eyes. He turned toward his prisoner, without catching the maddening scene in the sheriff's window.

"Yah," he grunted. "Yuh got a burr in the gullet huh?"

He got to his feet, weaved drunkenly. Sudden's mouth was open and he seemed to be dying. His hands gripped the grating, then slipped.

"A drink—for God's sake—a drink—"

The stupid jailer considered this. What had been good for him might be good for the other fellow. He picked up the bottle of redeye and pulled the cork. He staggered over, inserted the bottle through a square and tilted it to pour some of its fiery potion into Sudden's open mouth.

Sudden's fingers were like steel claws as they vised upon the jailer's wrist. All of his one hundred and seventy pounds went into the tremendous heave as he jerked the jailer forward. There was only the sickening sound of flesh and bone being rammed into iron as the flat-nosed jailer's face and head hit the grating.

Sudden got his body pulled around close and found the keys. Ten seconds later he was outside and the jailer's .45 warmed to his hand. Then he was under the inner window. He could now hear Rita's voice.

"Please—not that—Lark—you promised—"

The glass smashed as the .45 smoked. It jolted and smoked three times in Sudden's hand and he placed those bullets neatly. One for the sheriff's knee-cap. Another for his thick elbow where it was clear of Rita's nearly stripped, white body, and the third just as neatly smashing Sheriff Ponder's hard jaw from the side.

Sudden did not realize he was grating out terrible oaths as he crashed through, carrying window sash and glass with him. Perhaps Rita Derring didn't realize them either, for as the groaning mumbling lawman groveled on one knee beside his battered desk, tried to pull himself up and found he couldn't, Sudden had Rita in his arms.

UNCENSORED!

Are you going to the World's Fair in New York? Do you want to be an "insider"? Know all the ropes? Then you'll need this little book.

ONLY 25¢

NEW YORK
Behind the Scenes

Lee Mortimer, Editor

© 1939 by A.P.C.

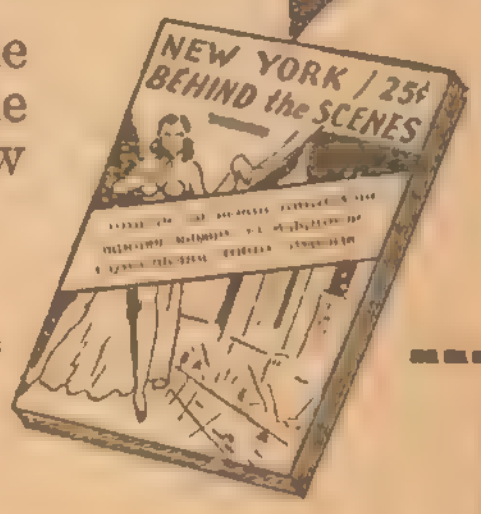
Tells you *everything* that's NOT in the guide-books. Even New Yorkers don't know half the "inside stuff" that's in it. Saves you money and valuable time—prevents you making costly mistakes. It is literally an

UNofficial GUIDE BOOK!

Uncensored exposes of rackets, gyps, sucker games. Tells you how to get the *best* of everything at the *lowest* prices. Priceless information you couldn't possibly get any other way—even if you lived in New York for years. There are hundreds of guide-books to the Fair and the Big City *but only one*

NEW YORK *Behind the Scenes*

The only UNcensored, UNofficial guide book that gives you the "low-down" on the things you really want to know about New York. Get your copy now.



Only a
LIMITED EDITION
Mail Coupon
TODAY!

AJAX PUBLISHING CO.
Room 933, 480 Lexington Ave.,
New York, N. Y.

I am enclosing 25c (stamps or coin). Please rush me, prepaid, a copy of NEW YORK BEHIND THE SCENES.

Name.....

Street Address.....

City..... State.....

His mouth was upon her red lips. And her hands didn't push at his face.

"You?" she said huskily. "Jim? Sudden Cassidy? Thank God—"

All of which became lost as he held her to him, and for the second time the girl failed to realize the scantiness of her attire. For she was sobbing, and laughing, and kissing him all at once as if she would never let him go.

She still had her lips warmly upon his mouth when a door crashed in.

SUDDEN whipped around. A desk drawer yielded. His gleaming badge went back upon his shirt. He had Sheriff Ponder's own handcuffs on his wrists, and the groaning, mumbling lawman sat on the floor and nursed his broken jaw with his unwounded hand.

"Thar he is—git the skunk—the sheriff cain't stop us—"

But the first hard-eyed men to reach the inner office halted abruptly. They saw dark-eyed Rita Derring with her arms around Sudden Cassidy, and perhaps it was her apparent shamelessness, or the wonderful sight of her nearly unclad body that stopped them, shut their mouths.

Rita's clear, unashamed voice rang out.

"If it's Sudden Cassidy you're honin' to take, I'll tell you he isn't the one—Lark Ponder tore off my clothes—he—"

Her breath caught then and she had the thought to shield herself some behind Sudden's lanky body. She went on.

"I found papers provin' he was roddin' them outlaws in the *malpais*, an' he threatened to kill me!" she cried out. "He—he tore off my dress, an' Sudden Cassidy gunned him down! Lark Ponder was behind Black Bart and—"

"And Black Bart spilled it when I twisted loose an ear," grinned Sudden. "I found it out this morning, anyway, when Sheriff Ponder had the chance to salivate Black Bart with a carbine and deliberately missed. I'm holdin' Ponder for all of the killin's and such that the malpais owlhooters committed."

Growled oaths grew in volume. But Sudden had two guns in his hands now, and his voice was quiet and deadly.

"Still he's my prisoner," he said. "I wouldn't want to kill honest men, but that's the law against lynch mobs as I know it."

The leaders looked into the smoky blue eyes. They looked at the scantily clad dark-eyed girl beside him.

Not a word was spoken. They turned and went out.

Shootin' Army Gal

(Continued from page 81)

showin' up Cap MacRae, if so I'm given the time—''

Buck swore as he turned off into the short trail. He knew well enough what Noel Angus meant. If he was given the time to try and make Colonel Thurston see sense in this land grabbing business?

But if it so happened that Angus fell into the hands of Captain MacRae and his few renegade troopers, no time would be given.

THE heavy gate of the Big Sioux post stockade creaked open. The girl on the blue grulla had so easily distanced Noel Angus that he was still a fourth of a mile away when he heard the gate. He had been listening to the running feet of the grulla and he could but breathe with relief when the girl had passed safely through the malpais and the barranca up to the post.

''Damn' funny, that'n,'' grunted Angus, as he heard the fort gate open and close. '' 'Course she's a gal, but they ain't always so quick on admittin' Red River pilgrims. Kind o' loco she didn't wait. But—''

GUNS crashed out in the darkness from both sides. Angus's horse reared, made a long leap, and went down on wilting forelegs. It gave one scream of pain and lay

Thousands of pleased users say my plates saved them many dollars, improved their appearance. Aids speech.
FREE Sanitary Wrapped Impression Material and INSTRUCTIONS how to order by mail.
DON'T DELAY. Write for Money Saving Prices TODAY.
60 DAYS TRIAL
Dr. J. S. Lippert
Plate Specialist with 35 years' experience
Pres. Dr. Jos. S. Lippert Dental Lab., Inc.
Dept. 550-JY 24 E. Van Buren Street, Chicago

EARN BIG PROFITS QUICKLY!
Here are Money Making Ties!
NEW SPRING LINE READY
Jobbers! Wholesalers! Agents!
Outstanding line of hand and machine made ties; tie & handkerchief ensembles.
Men's neckwear, $1.25 doz., up.
Ready tied Slyde-On ties, $2.15 doz., up.
Lower prices in large quantities.
Write for Full Particulars and Prepare for a Successful Spring Season.
FREE Catalog & Swatches write today!
EMPIRE CRAVATS 22 West 21st St., Dept. FI, N. Y. C.

WIN SUCCESS
MONEY · LOVE · HAPPINESS

"I Won Fifty-Four Dollars the day I received my Miraculous Medal and I think it has helped me ever since," says Mrs. E. Erikson, of Chicago, Illinois.
BE A WINNER
Would you like to be SUCCESSFUL at everything you try to do? Miraculous Medals are said to be worn by Millions of Believers all over the world as a petition to the Holy Virgin for Prayer and Protection from Evil. We make no supernatural claims, but we GUARANTEE that ours are Genuine Miraculous Medals with a Prayer to the Holy Virgin. Order Now.
SEND NO MONEY Just send your name and address Today and on delivery merely DEPOSIT the small sum of only 98c plus postage with the mailman. We GUARANTEE that your Miraculous Medal will MAKE A HIT with you the DAY YOU RECEIVE IT or money returned INSTANTLY. Order At Once.
Medal Products, 11 Commerce St., Dept. CF-6, Newark, N. J.

MEN MAKE 75%
Buy and sell personal needs, razor blades, direct from manufacturer, through our mail order dept. Everything mailed postpaid. Send for Big FREE catalog. ATEX CO., Dept. R, Box 353, Hamilton, Ontario.

GET ACQUAINTED CLUB
Confidential introduction by letter. Members in every state seeking congenial mates. Many wealthy. If lonely write:
R. E. SIMPSON, Box 1251 Denver, Colo.

Original POEMS – SONGS WANTED FOR PUBLICATION
WESTMORE MUSIC CORP., Dept. 23F, Portland, Ore.

there quivering and dying as blood spouted from its neck.

Thrown, half stunned by landing on one shoulder, Angus rolled, his guns rasping from their leathers. The whanging of guns increased to attack from three different directions. Angus felt as if someone had rapped him over one shoulder with a club, and the peacemaker in that hand fell from nerveless fingers.

"You don't s'pose—"

Angus rolled bitter, questioning words from his throat. Behind them a thought that burned his brain and his heart.

This girl? Ruth Barkley, she had said? Could she have led him directly into an ambush trap? Hell! Come to think of it, when he had first met up with her, she had been doing some almighty curious shooting? Sending bullets that seemed to be intended to taunt the crooked Captain MacRae?

Damnation! That might have been a trap, too. Suppose he had been spotted, and the trick shooting had been meant to draw him out into the open barranca where he had seen Captain MacRae. Then the girl could have accidentally been dragged by her runaway pony.

Again, by all the holies, Cap MacRae's own troop of gun slingers had been right handy, riding out of the post and all set for the pursuit of Noel Angus.

"Why, you damn', suspicion' scut," grated Angus. "It ain't no ways possible—"

With the warmth of her kisses still in his memory, even with lead singing around him, Angus cursed himself for this fleeting thought.

Funny though, how fast a hombre will think when death is nipping at his ears.

Angus bellied down, gaining as much shelter as he could alongside the still quivering body of his dead horse. With one arm useless, he could only start triggering with his left hand, keeping the fallen gun close and ready to replace the iron he was emptying.

Wham! Wham! Wham!

Lead buzzed like angry hornets. The pluck-pluck-pluck of slugs hitting the horse's body was proof that this ambush was intended to be a death circle. Angus drew little satisfaction from seeing a black shadow rear up and hearing a man scream as one of his bullets found him.

Only the encircling, spiteful blazes of the guns for marks, Angus desperately determined there was no way out. He could tell when more lead sliced into his flesh, and his reason told him that Cap MacRae was viciously determined that he never should reach Colonel Thurston.

A bullet burned under his left armpit, and Angus clenched his teeth with pain, knowing that when he ceased replying, that would be the finish. Madness lay in the thoughts he had given to the girl's possible part in all this, and in the further surety that MacRae and the land grabbers would lay most of their crimes upon him, once he was dead.

Honest Red River settlers would be cleaned out, and without doubt MacRae would maintain that Noel Angus had been the outlaw behind the Black Riders. If he could but

CLASSIFIED SECTION

SONG POEMS WANTED

WANTED ORIGINAL POEMS, SONGS, FOR IMMEDIate consideration. Send poems to Columbian Music Publishers Ltd., Dept. 139, Toronto, Can.

ORIGINAL POEMS, SONGS WANTED FOR PUBLICAtion, radio. Submit material today for our offer. Westmore Music Corporation, Dept. 23E, Portland, Ore.

PERSONAL

LONESOME? Join Reliable Club—established 1909. Book of photos and descriptions of wealthy members Free, sealed. The Exchange. L-3827 Main, Kansas City, Mo.

REASONABLE RATES Friendship Club. Ruth Stelbert, Box 2718, Houston, Texas.

LONELY? Find Romance and Happiness through our Select Correspondence Society. Dale Farrant, Box 2208-C, Hollywood, Calif.

BORED? We arrange correspondence introductions. Inclose stamp. Club Savoy, P. O. Box 244, Pasadena, Calif.

FOR AN AFFECTIONATE sweetheart, worthwhile and generous, write: MARY LEE, 445-W, Rolla, Missouri.

Become Acquainted Correspondence Club. If lonely write for Free sealed information. Members from every state. Many wealthy. "The Best in the West." P. O. Box 5535-C, Los Angeles, Calif.

DETECTIVES

Become a detective. Opportunity to earn while learning. Free detective particulars. Ray Stults, Bristol, Indiana.

DETECTIVES — MAKE SECRET INVESTIGATIONS. Experience unnecessary. Detective particulars FREE. Write. George Wagner, 2640-B Broadway, N. Y.

MAGIC TRICKS, PUZZLES, JOKER NOVELTIES

Giant surprise catalog of jokes, tricks, magic, puzzles, novelties, curiosities rushed for 25c. Free knockout trick. Lawson Vick, Dept. C-2, Queens Village, N. Y.

CURIOS

Old Glass. Dolls. Indian Relics. Beadwork. Curios. Minerals. Coins. Stamps. Books. Miniatures. Catalogue 5c. Indian Museum, Northbranch, Kansas.

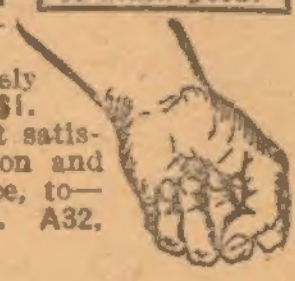
OLD MONEY WANTED

WILL PAY $5.00 EACH FOR CERTAIN LINCOLN pennies; Indianheads $100.00; Dimes $700.00. Catalogue 10c. Federal Coin Exchange, Columbus, Ohio.

GLAND-WEAKNESS

Test At Our Risk

From S. T., Miss., "One box did me so much good."



MEN now can help nature to restore the prostate to normal activity with our Guaranteed PROSAID Gland Medicine. When Bodily Debility is shown thru gland weakness and you begin to feel *"old* and *worn out,"* then immediately give nature this potent assistance. **Double XX, $1. Triple XXX, $2.** C. O. D. postage extra. If not satisfied after using 3 days return the unused portion and receive your refund. Send for PROSAID at once, to— **X-L PRODUCTS, 3335 Belle Plaine, Dept. A32, Chicago, Ill.**

CLOSING OUT 1,000,000 NEW & USED BOOKS AT 20c EACH

5 assorted (our selection) standard full-size cloth-bound volumes weighing over 5 pounds, for your library, sent POSTPAID to any address in the United States for $1.00 cash, stamps or money order. This tremendous stock comprises thrilling Western and Detective Stories, exotic, tantalizing and unexpurgated fiction, non-fiction, biographies, etc., by the world's most famous authors. Publishers' original prices on some of these books were as high as $5.00 per volume. To insure good selection, RUSH your order NOW! SATISFACTION GUARANTEED or money refunded. We pay the postage on all orders.

P. LEWIS & CO., 128 EAST 23rd St. NEW YORK N. Y.

DRAFTING

BOOKS SENT FREE!

ON APPROVAL

5 VOLUMES BRAND NEW EDITION

For Beginners or Experts

Written; so you can understand every word, by 22 well known engineers and architects. De-Luxe flexible binding, nearly 2,000 pages, 1546 blueprints, charts and diagrams; prepares you for a good drafting job in mechanical or architectural lines. Sent for 10 days' free use if you mail coupon immediately.

Only 15 minutes a day with these WONDER BOOKS can prepare you for a good drafting job in less than a year. Mechanical and architectural drafting from simple straight lines to important complex plans. *A step at a time!* Built especially for beginners, for men with only grammar schooling. Drafting room practice, PLUS ENGINEERING, made easy and clear. **Includes complete course in blueprint reading.**

Big Field Big Demand Big Pay

Competent draftsmen are urgently needed right now in all building and manufacturing lines at $30.00 to $75.00 a week. That's just the beginning—FOR DRAFTSMEN HAVE THE BEST CHANCES FOR ADVANCEMENT. Pleasant, fascinating work, easy to learn and do. Learn quickly with these books—send coupon for a set and see for yourself.

A year's consulting membership in the American Technical Society now given to all readers of this famous cyclopedia of drafting. Many say that it is worth more than the cost of the books.

These Instruments Included

Complete set of drawing instruments if you send for these drafting books NOW. These instruments are made of the finest of German silver, are absolutely accurate and are packed in velvet lined leatherette pocket case. Real $10 value, but included with these books.

AMERICAN TECHNICAL SOCIETY
Dept. D328, Drexel at 58th St., Chicago, Ill.

American Technical Society, Dept. D328, Drexel at 58th St., Chicago, Ill.

Send for 10 days' trial New 5 volume set of drafting. I will pay the few cents delivery charges. If I wish, I may return books in 10 days and owe you nothing but if I decide to keep them, I will send $2.00 after 10 days, then only $3.00 a month until $24.80, the advertising price, is paid. Send latest edition and include drawing instruments and Membership Certificate.

Name.....

Address.....

Attach letter stating age, occupation, employer's name and address and that of at least one business man as a reference.

LONESOME? No need to be. Join our Nationally famous club. FREE particulars. Write today to THE PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE CLUB. P. O. Box 155, SHAMOKIN, PENNA.

find Cap MacRae among these yellow-bellied, gulching killers.

"It wouldn't be much, but by hell! If I could only drill that poison skunk 'fore they get me!"

There could be no more than two or three bullets left in the old peacemakers. Angus deliberately held up his fire, waiting. If he could hear Cap MacRae's voice, perhaps there might be a chance to chalk off that score at least.

It came—

"He's done in!" came the rasping voice of MacRae. "Leastwise his irons are empty! Rush 'im now! It's good—"

That would be MacRae. Telling the others to rush him, while the worthy captain kept his own carcass clear of any chance of collecting his dues. But as growled oaths replied to MacRae, and boots shuffled among the mesquite bushes, Angus picked out the spot from which MacRae had spoken.

In the face of what could be none other than blasting death, Angus made his feet and found that his legs were still intact. He lunged straight toward the clump of mesquite where MacRae had been heard.

THERE was a sudden silence of guns. A breathless instant in which Angus's enemies seemed to be confused, possibly afraid to risk gunning down one of their own numbers.

So it was a bloody-faced, staggering, terrible figure that loomed suddenly in the mesquite directly above the hawk-nosed, uniformed Captain MacRae. MacRae let out a squawk that held a sheer note of fear and tried to bring up his snub-nosed army Colts.

Angus had but one good arm, but working fist. Some cold, unreasoning fury caused the Red River "owlhooter" to drop the gun he held and to smash out with his knuckles, wanting the bloody feel of flesh and bone crunching under his own cracking skin.

Cap MacRae was a bulky man, but no man on earth could have stood up under that terrific smash. But then, as he went down, Angus, weakened and bleeding from half a dozen wounds, fell with him. And Cap MacRae's snub-nosed iron swung around. Its cold muzzle prodded into Angus's neck.

It made Angus more sick because he had failed, than because he was about to die. And his mind and nerve were braced for the shock of dying. In that flashing moment, he could again see the warmly tanned, sweet face of the girl who had crept unbidden into his arms.

Somehow he knew then, with the surety of revealed fate before dying, that her kisses were true, that some unexplained whim of fortune had put her into his arms—

But a bullet was coming. Angus was set, and he heard MacRae say, "They'll hang you to the post gate as a warning to any that cross up the Black Birds what'll happen—they'll—"

The shot came, but to Angus it was not the flesh-tearing blast he had expected. Nevertheless it was a straight, sure shot. And there had been the flare of a thrown pine torch just before it came.

A deep, throaty groan came from Captain MacRae.

Angus imagined he saw the vivid

face of the girl he had kissed. Her eyes glowed and they were behind a silver-plated six-gun with a spining cylinder.

The girl's face retreated into the deep, red haze that came before Angus's eyes. He could vaguely hear shouts, the pounding of horses' hoofs, the crang and the bang of guns. And near the girl, erect and grayhaired on a dancing gray horse, rode the ramrod figure of Colonel Thurston.

NOEL ANGUS awakened to imagine he was again on a flat, black rock, with living kisses clinging to his lips. So an hombre had to be dead to dream things like that!

But the lips clung, and a remembered sob was back in a voice.

Her eyes were warm and swimming, and Angus saw that he was lying in a white bed in a white room, with the chopped sides of hewn beams in the ceiling above. Only at Big Sioux post was such a room.

Angus said hoarsely, "Ruth—honey—where—"

"You're to keep quiet like any other damn' lead monument ought to keep," growled a shirt-sleeved man, the post surgeon. "Hell an' all, young fella! When you've been sieved by enough lead to build a statue, you're dead. The *Medical Digest* says so—"

"Shut up, doc!" spoke a crisp commanding voice.

White-haired Colonel Thurston stood beside the girl whose soft arms pillowed Angus's head.

"I reckon you know, Noel Angus, that you're a rapscallion, an' you could be lynched for abductin' my daughter an' sendin' her back clean out of her mind," went on Colonel Thurston grimly. "Only if we hang you up by the neck, this girl o' mine, Ruth, would be just like her mother. An' her mother would make it hell an' all for anybody who went out an' strung up somebody she liked."

This was bad. Angus had an idea that his mind must be all stopped up again. But his thoughts gradually cleared.

The wild, gun shootin' gal who seemed to feel she had a right to keep on kissing him, in spite of all the army rules, his being bran[ded] as an outlaw, and the prese[nce] several persons, including [the] fied Buck Kellar, told ho[w] set out to find Noel A[ngus] had been followed by [Cap]tain Rae, who had made [love] advances to her. [Angus] stopped him with a [bullet] shooting.

"Funny," said Ruth, "but when Noel Angus was branded as an outlaw, I liked his name. Then I overheard Captain MacRae plotting to seize you, honey, and have you lynched, in order to clear the Black Riders of suspicion. I wanted to see you before I told dad about all this, for he trusted Captain MacRae. So—"

"So Captain MacRae met with a sad accident, Noel Angus," said Colonel Thurston. "And, judging from her mother, you have met with a worse one. I warn you that my daughter isn't to be trusted. Why, she will—"

"Yes," said Noel Angus, his head pillowed by pulsating curves. "I'm judgin' I know what you mean, colonel."

The Forbidden Secrets of Sex are Daringly Revealed!

AWAY with false modesty! At last a famous doctor has told *all* the secrets of sex in frank, daring language. No prudish beating about the bush, no veiled hints, but TRUTH, blazing through 576 pages of straightforward facts.

Love is the most *magnificent ecstasy* in the world . . . know how to hold your loved one, don't glean half-truths from unreliable sources. Now you can know how to end ignorance . . . fear . . . and self denial!

Everything pertaining to sex is discussed in daring language. All the things you have wanted to know about your sex life, information about which other books only vaguely hint, is yours at last.

MORE THAN 100 VIVID PICTURES

The 106 illustrations leave *little* to the imagination . . . know how to overcome physical misrating . . . know what to do on the wedding night to avoid the torturing of ignorance.

. . . will be offended by the amazing . . . of this book and its vivid illustra- . . . the world has no longer any use . . . and false modesty.

. . . *slave* to ignorance and fear, . . . rous delights of the perfect

. . . dal . . . divorce . . . can . . . by knowledge. Only . . . *awful penalties* of . . . Read the facts, clearly, . . . udy these illustrations . . . ess no longer.

. . . O MONEY!

To show you our faith in your satisfaction with this amazing book, we are offering it to you on trial. You send no money—just fill out the coupon below and then when it arrives, in plain wrapper, pay the postman $2.98 plus postage. Keep the book five days, then if you are not completely satisfied, send it back and we will refund your money immediately without question. "Eugenics and Sex Harmony" will not be sold to minors.

576 DARING PAGES

ATTRACT THE OPPOSITE SEX!

Know *how to enjoy* the thrilling experiences that are your birthright . . . know how to attract the opposite sex . . . how to hold love.

Are you an awkward novice in the art of love-making? Or, a master of its difficult technique? Knowledge is the basis of the perfect, satisfying love life. Ignorance leads to fear, worry, disease and shame. End ignorance *today*. You owe it to yourself—to the one you love—to read this book NOW!

A FAMOUS JUDGE SAYS THAT MOST DIVORCES ARE CAUSED BY SEX IGNORANCE!

■ When a man and woman who have been mutually attracted to each other and have enjoyed each other's company separate, there must be some tragic misunderstanding. In most cases that misunderstanding is due to sex ignorance.

IS SEX IGNORANCE DRIVING THE ONE YOU LOVE INTO THE ARMS OF ANOTHER?

■ Learn how to keep the love of your husband or wife at the high pitch of thrilling ecstasy and devotion. A satisfactory sex life will bind your loved one to you for all time.

STATE AGE WHEN ORDERING

OVER GRAPH Illustrati

WHAT EVERY MAN SHOULD KNOW

The Sexual Embrace — *Can Virility Be Regained?*
Secrets of the Honeymoon — Sexual Starvation
Mistakes of Early Marriage — Glands and Sex Instinct
Venereal Diseases — The Truth About Abuse

WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW

Joys of Perfect Mating — How to Attract and Hold Men
What to Allow a Lover to Do — Sexual Slavery of Women
Intimate Feminine Hygiene — Essentials of Happy Marriage
Birth Control — The Sex Organs

There is no longer any need to pay th *awful price* for one moment of bliss. Read the scientific pathological facts told so bravely by Dr. Rubin. The chapters on venereal disease are alone worth the price of this book!

You want to know, and you *should* know *every thing* about sex. Sex is no longer a sin, a mys . . . it is your great . . . st power for happiness. You owe it to yourself, to the one you love, to tear aside the curtain of hypocrisy and learn the *naked truth!*

Pioneer Publications, Inc., 1270-6th Ave., Dept. 736, New York, N. Y.
Please send me, "Eugenics and Sex Harmony" in plain wrapper. If I am not completely satisfied I can return the book and the entire purchase price will be refunded immediately. Also send me free of charge your book on "New Birth Control Facts."
☐ Send C.O.D. plus postage. ☐ I enclose $2.98, ship postpaid.

Name _____

Address _____

City and State _____ *Age* _____

Orders from Foreign Countries 15 Shillings in Advance

FREE! AMAZING NEW BOOK ON NATURAL METHOD OF BIRTH CONTROL

AWAY with artificial devices! Nature offers a dependable, healthful method of controlling conception as recently proven in startling scientific tests. The famous Ogino-Knaus theory of rhythmic birth control is explained in detail and includes a complete table of fertile periods. This book is FREE with orders for "Eugenics and Sex Harmony"

PIONEER PUBLICATIONS, INC.
Radio . . . 1270 Sixth Ave., New York City